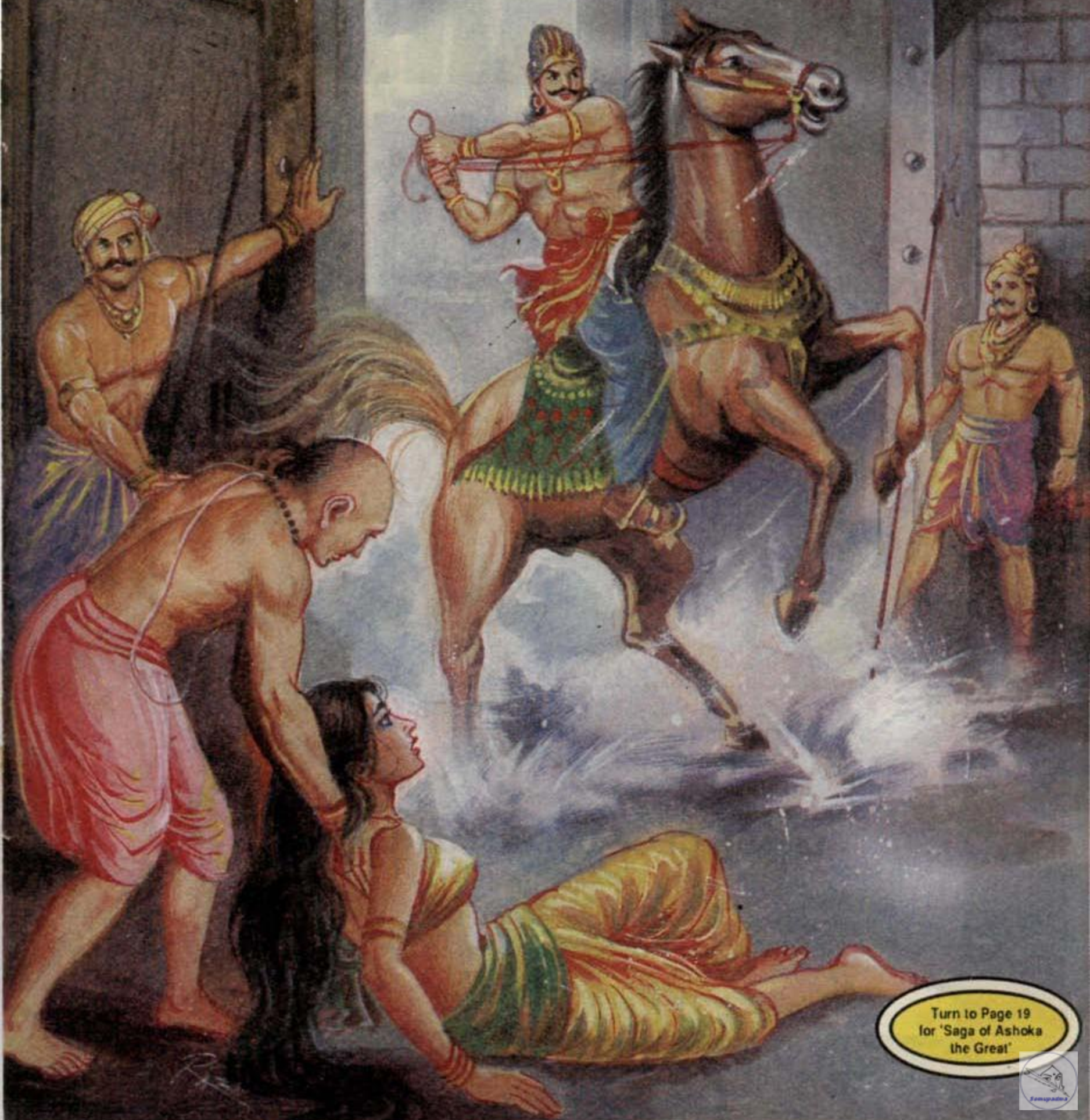


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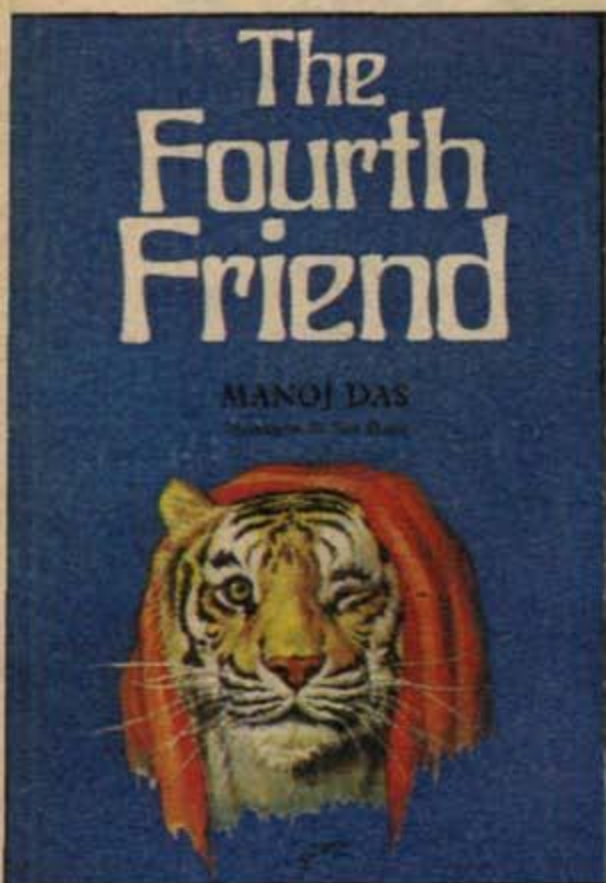
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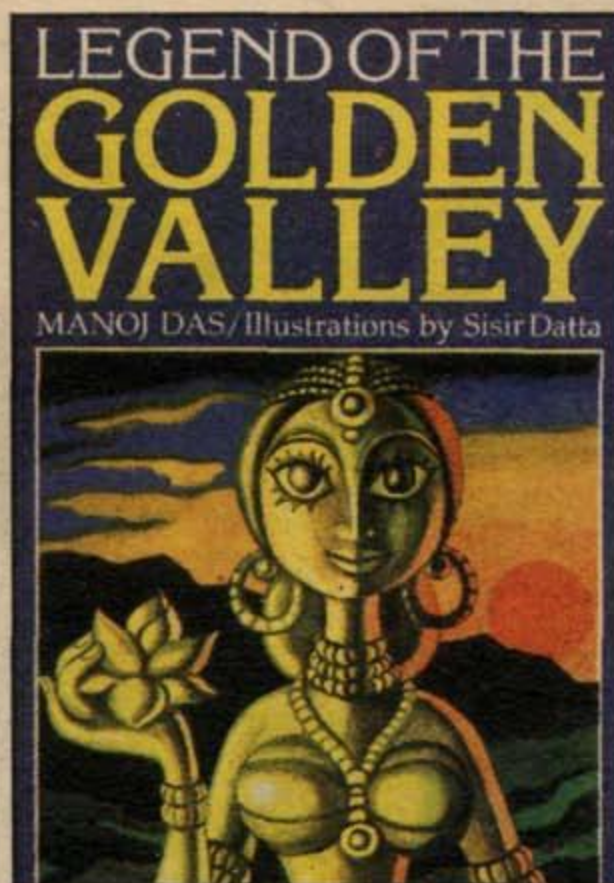


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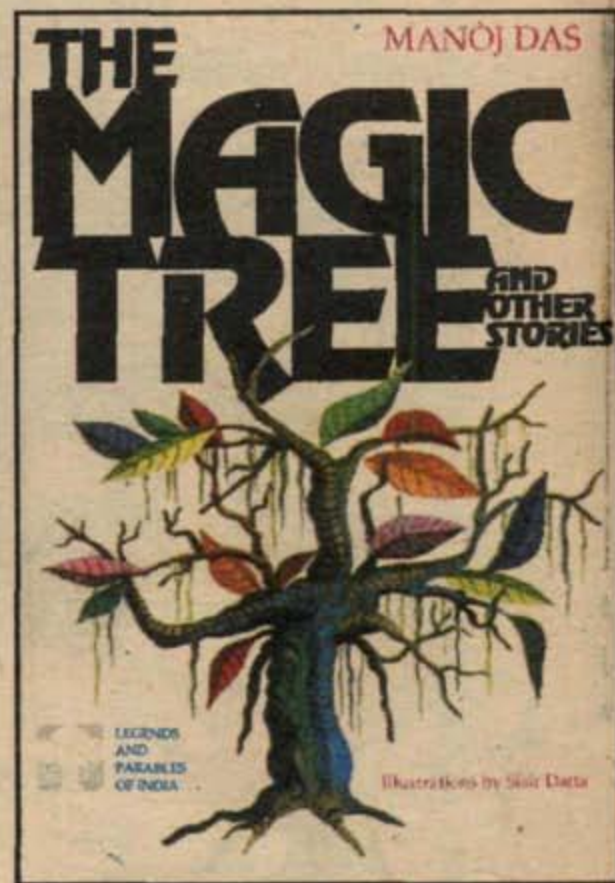
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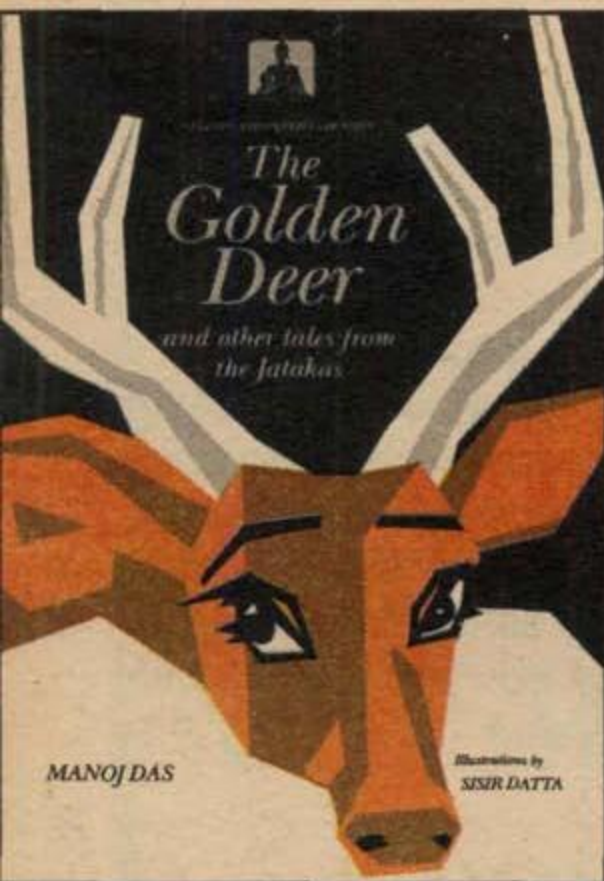


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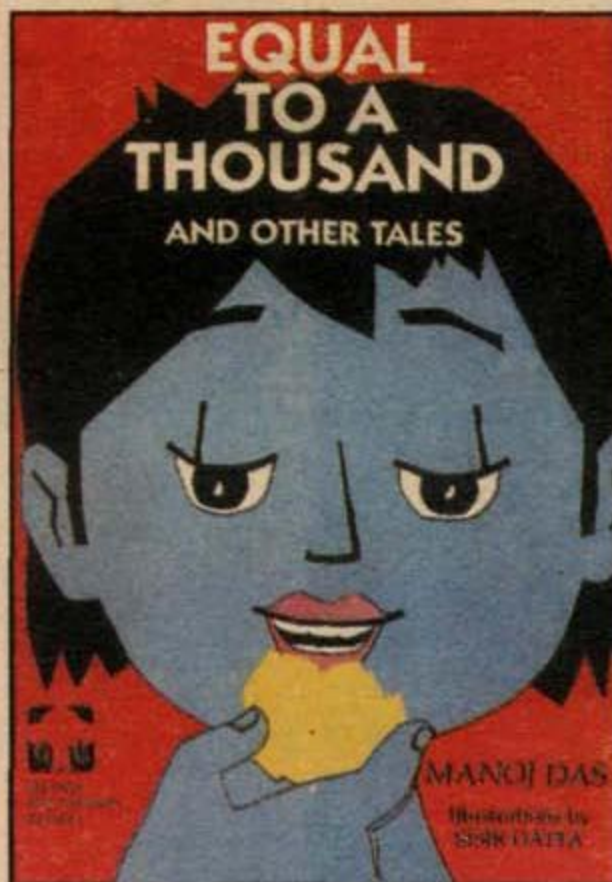
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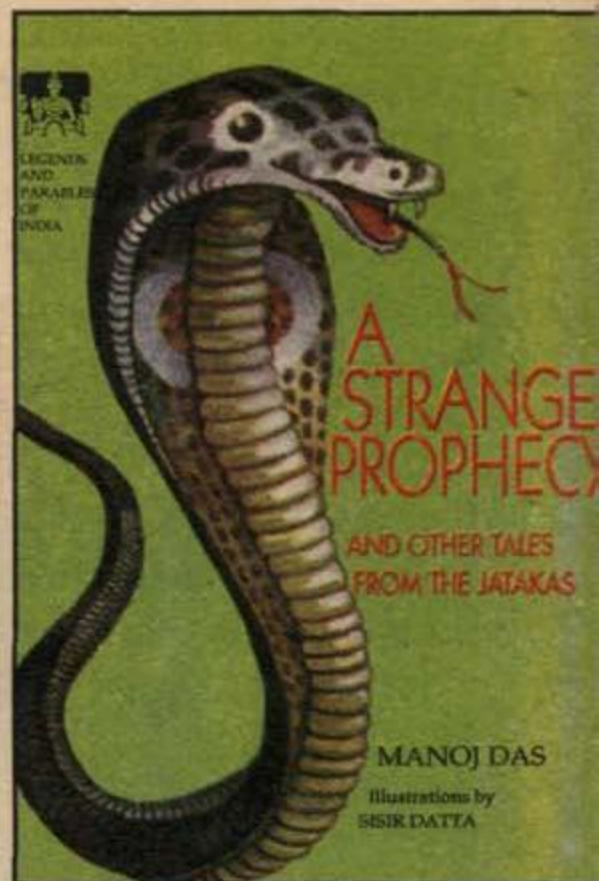
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IN THIS ISSUE

Vol. 26 FEBRUARY 1996 No. 8

Stories :

Sweet And Sour Page 13
Saga of Ashoka The Great Page 19
Stories From Mahabharata - 16	... Page 30
A Matter Of Law!	.... Page 37
The Magic Mirror	.... Page 41
A Test Too Much	.... Page 53
Abracadabra	.... Page 58
What An Excuse!	.... Page 63

Picture Stories :

Panchatantra-62 Page 48
-----------------	--------------

Chandamama Pull-Out :

Coastal Journeys - 5	...Page 33
----------------------	------------

Features :

Sanctions End Friendship Starts	... Page 12
Supplement - 88	.... Page 26
Children In The News	.... Page 29
Towards Better English	.... Page 51
Sports: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow	.... Page 57
Let Us Know!	.... Page 64

NEXT ISSUE

Vol. 26 MARCH 1996 No. 9

SAGA OF ASHOKA THE GREAT : A poor brahmin brings his daughter to King Vindusara. She has been prophecied to become a queen. The king is amused and allows her to stay in the palace. And he forgets all about her! In atonement, he weds her. The senior queens are not happy about "a beggar's daughter" becoming a royal consort. When a son is born to her, she feels, that is the end of her 'shoka'(sorrow). How does Ashoka grow in the midst of his step-brothers?

ASUITOR'S QUALIFICATIONS : Princess Matangi of Mangalpuri is a restless girl. She loves to roam the country. Her parents let her enjoy that freedom. After all she is always accompanied by the maid Vimala. The King and queen broach to Matangi the question of marriage, and proposes the Prince of Swarn giri. He might have studied in a gurukul but, then, most princes are sent to ashrams. So, what is special about him? asks the princess. Her suitor must be capable of walking on water and fire. He must also answer three questions. What are these questions?

PLUS the colour comics **PANCHATANTRA**, **CHANDAMAMA SUPPLEMENT**, and the fascinating **COASTAL JOURNEYS**.

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CHAKRAPANI



Controlling Editor :
NAGI REDDI

Equality with boys

The year that has just gone by – 1995—was the Year of the Girl Child. It happened to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and one of its major agencies – UNICEF or the United Nations Children's Fund. UNICEF's 1995 report on the state of children of the world laid stress on the girl child.

Some interesting facts and figures: The world average shows that there are 105 women for 100 men. Among the very few countries where men outnumber women is India; there are only 93 women for 100 men. However, in four States with more women than men, one of them being Kerala, they live up to 74 years. The life span for women in U.P. is only 54 years.

Wherever there are planned and well-organised welfare schemes for women, they lead a better life and live longer. UNICEF has a special word for Kerala. The high percentage of literacy there has paved the way for this near-ideal state of affairs. Kerala is way ahead of other States in the matter of child welfare. The rate of infant mortality is only 32 per 1,000; in Assam it is 142.

The UNICEF report emphasises the need to give the girl child compulsory primary education, instead of forcing her to remain at home to attend to household chores. The contention put forth by the parents of children not attending school is, it is difficult to find bridegrooms for girls if they are educated!

In one breath we say we are on the threshold of a new century; in the same breath, we sound as if we have another *five centuries more* to reach the 21st! Things have to change. Girls should not be discriminated. They must enjoy whatever the boys enjoy and in equal measure, too.



A WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Sanctions end Friendship starts

One region which suffered an armed conflict for nearly 30 years even after the end of the Second World War (1939-45) is Vietnam. Independent forces led by the now father-figure Ho Chi Minh fought for eight years to drive away the colonial power, France. After the French withdrew, the country was divided into Communist North Vietnam and South Vietnam as per the agreement signed at the 1954 Geneva conference.

However, the conflict did not end there. The pro-Communist guerrillas in South Vietnam, supported by troops from North Vietnam, clashed with South Vietnamese troops, who received help from the U.S.A., which sent nearly 550,000 soldiers between 1959 and 1969 to fight in what later came to be called the Vietnam war. Thousands of American soldiers lost their lives, and there was pressure at home to stop sending any more soldiers to Vietnam. Following a massive Communist offensive in 1972, the U.S.A. withdrew its forces the next year. But it took another two years for the war to end in that eastern part of the Indo - China peninsula.

The U.S.A. could not forget the humiliation it suffered in Vietnam, and the two countries remained adversaries for the next 20 years, during which time the U.S.A. had imposed an economic embargo on that country. In 1992, President George Bush partially eased the embargo, which act gave moral strength to his successor, President Bill Clinton, to lift the sanctions in 1994. A year later, the U.S.A. went ahead re-establishing normal relations with Vietnam. Bill Clinton echoed the sentiments of one of his early predecessors – Abraham Lincoln – when he said, it was "a time to heal and a time to build".

This happy denouement has given a fillip to the present efforts to integrate the Vietnamese in the North and South.





SWEET AND SOUR

A wedding was to take place in a temple in Palanpur. The bridegroom's party started from the village in six bullock-carts. The men and women were making merry as the carts slowly wended their way. Some were singing, others were playing instruments. The cart in the rear carried food and delicacies to be served; also the servers.

The chief cook, Sevaram, was mentally checking the items to find whether they had taken everything from home. What a shame! They had forgotten one item – *laddoos*. He told one of the servers, "We cleanly forgot to bring the laddoos, Raju. You do one thing. Get down here, and run home to pick up the basket and run back taking the short-cut. You can join us on the way. Make it fast. We shall give you an extra ten rupees."

That was enough incentive for Raju. He jumped out of the vehicle

and ran home. In no time he picked up the basket, and carrying it on his head, he ran as fast as he could, taking the short-cut and looking out for the convoy of bullock-carts. There was no sign of them. Besides, he was panting. He thought there was time to rest for a brief while. He placed the basket on the ground and leaned against the basket.

He was not far away from the sea coast. He was fascinated by the waves, rising high and lashing against the sandy coast. Suddenly he saw a boat approaching the coast. There were some strangers in the boat, all clad in clothes not familiar in their village. They spoke in hushed tones and in a language he could not understand. Were they real men? Or could they be ghosts? wondered Raju. One of them had a staff in his hand and the way he swung it in his hand, he appeared to be their leader.



Poor Raju was trembling in his knees. He regretted that he had agreed to the assignment because of his greed for some extra income. He caught hold of the basket and began running. But the 'ghost' clad in black thrust his staff to prevent Raju from proceeding further. "Brother, don't run away. It'll be a shame for we Indian ghosts if we were to run away from these foreign ghosts. By the way. I'm an Indian ghost."

By then the other ghosts had got out of the boat and come near them. They asked the black one something to which he replied in their language. Though Raju could not understand anything, he now got some confidence

and asked the Indian ghost, "What were they enquiring?"

"They were wondering whether you are a human being or a ghost like them," replied the black ghost. He then noticed that the other ghosts were looking this way and that as if they caught a delicate smell. "Brother, they seem to be attracted by some smell. What're you carrying in that basket?"

Raju removed the cloth covering the basket, revealing the laddoos inside. The ghosts now gathered round the basket and clamoured for the sweetmeat. The black ghost gave them one laddoo each. They all enjoyed the delicacy. One of the ghosts—looking elderly – without any hesitation,



packed up the remaining laddoos in the cloth that once covered the basket, and went back towards their boat.

The black ghost stood aghast. "They seem to love the laddoos!" he said, apologetically.

Raju could not control his anger. "That may be, but the laddoos were meant for serving at a wedding reception tomorrow. If they are not served at the party, I'll lose my job!"

The black ghost took pity on him. He called one of the ghosts to his side and explained Raju's predicament. He immediately went after the elder ghost and whispered something into his ears. They both disappeared into the boat.

For some time there was no sign of them. Then they saw the younger ghost coming out of the boat and walking towards where Raju and the black ghost were standing. He was carrying the same cloth like a bundle, as if something had been tied in it. He gave it to Raju, who found it rather heavy. He untied the cloth and the sight almost blinded him. The bundle had gold coins!

He heard the ghost tell something to the black ghost, before he walked back to the boat. Raju asked the black ghost what it was. "The coins are all for you," the ghost explained. "They would come back to this very spot



next full moon day and they want you to be waiting for them with more sweetmeat." The black ghost found that all others had already boarded the boat and so he rushed to join them.

Raju was in a dilemma. Shouldn't he go to Palanpur and explain to the chief cook and others what happened on the way and to the laddoos? Or should he get back to his village and wait for the wedding party? By the time he could come to a decision and return to his own home it was well past midnight. His wife opened the door.

As soon as he entered their bedroom, he put down the basket, and

spread the cloth on the floor. The coins jingled. Raju's wife held her breath and stood like a statue. She had never seen so many gold coins in her life. He told her all that had happened. "You keep all that to yourself," he cautioned her. "I think we're in for a period of luck. I won't be surprised if god almighty showers on us more of his blessings. I'm sure we will earn more wealth thanks to these ghosts. Remember next full moon day. You must prepare a lot of sweetmeat. After I get more gold coins, I must start a shop. Anyway, don't tell anybody about our plans."

Raju's wife readily agreed, as she too was not keen that her friends

should come to know of their meeting with Dame Fortune. But women generally cannot keep secrets for long. Raju's wife, Ramya, confided in her neighbour Shalini who, in turn, told her husband Shankar, who owned a sweetmeat shop. He was advised to take a basket of sweetmeat on full moon day. "If you go and meet the ghosts earlier than Raju, you'll get all the gold coins," Shalini prompted him. "You can come back with the basket full of coins!"

Shankar was a henpecked husband, and so he did not have the courage to tell her that ghosts do not go about carrying gold coins. "All right," he said, "I shall do as you tell me."



Shalini smiled. It was a mischievous smile. "When you go to the sea coast, Raju should not be there. And I've a plan to ensure that Raju doesn't go there at all." And she disclosed the plan to him.

Another two days to go for full moon. Shankar left home and came back the next day. He straight away went to Raju's house where he met his wife. "I've just come back from your village; I had some work there. It was good that I went, and I am able to give you the news. Your mother is indisposed. It's rather serious. She has expressed a desire to see you."

All the while Shankar was watching her face. "It appears they had sent someone with a message. Didn't he come and tell you? These days people are most undependable. I was fortunate to go there yesterday," he added.

Shalini's plan was working, for, Raju and Ramya immediately left for her village. They were quite perturbed when they left. Shalini enthusiastically packed more than one basket of sweetmeat. Ultimately as many as five baskets were ready. They loaded them on to a cart and left for the sea coast. Shalini accompanied her husband. When they reached the place, they sat there watching the sea and waiting for the boat.



Nearing midnight, they saw a boat approaching. Soon it landed at the sandy beach. The ghosts got down from the boat one after the other. The black ghost led them, swinging the staff in his hand. Today he was swinging it violently as if he was furious. Shalini approached him. "Where's that rascal?" thundered the ghost.

She guessed who he was referring to—Raju. "What to say, sir?" said Shalini pitifully. "He has gone off the rock, and is roaring like a mad man. That's why we have come, bringing the sweetmeat for you. We've brought full five baskets!"





Shalini got the shock of her life. Instead of being pleased, the ghost was really angry. "Who wants your sweetmeat! Take it away! Or dump it in the sea. Those laddoos! They ate them with relish, but everyone of them had stomachache and stomach upset. They've all now turned against me. I was foolish to have introduced him to them. But, where's he? They've brought me to be left here. They don't want me any longer. I may have to spend the rest of my life in some corner here. But, I can tell you, I won't spare him if ever I meet him." He then

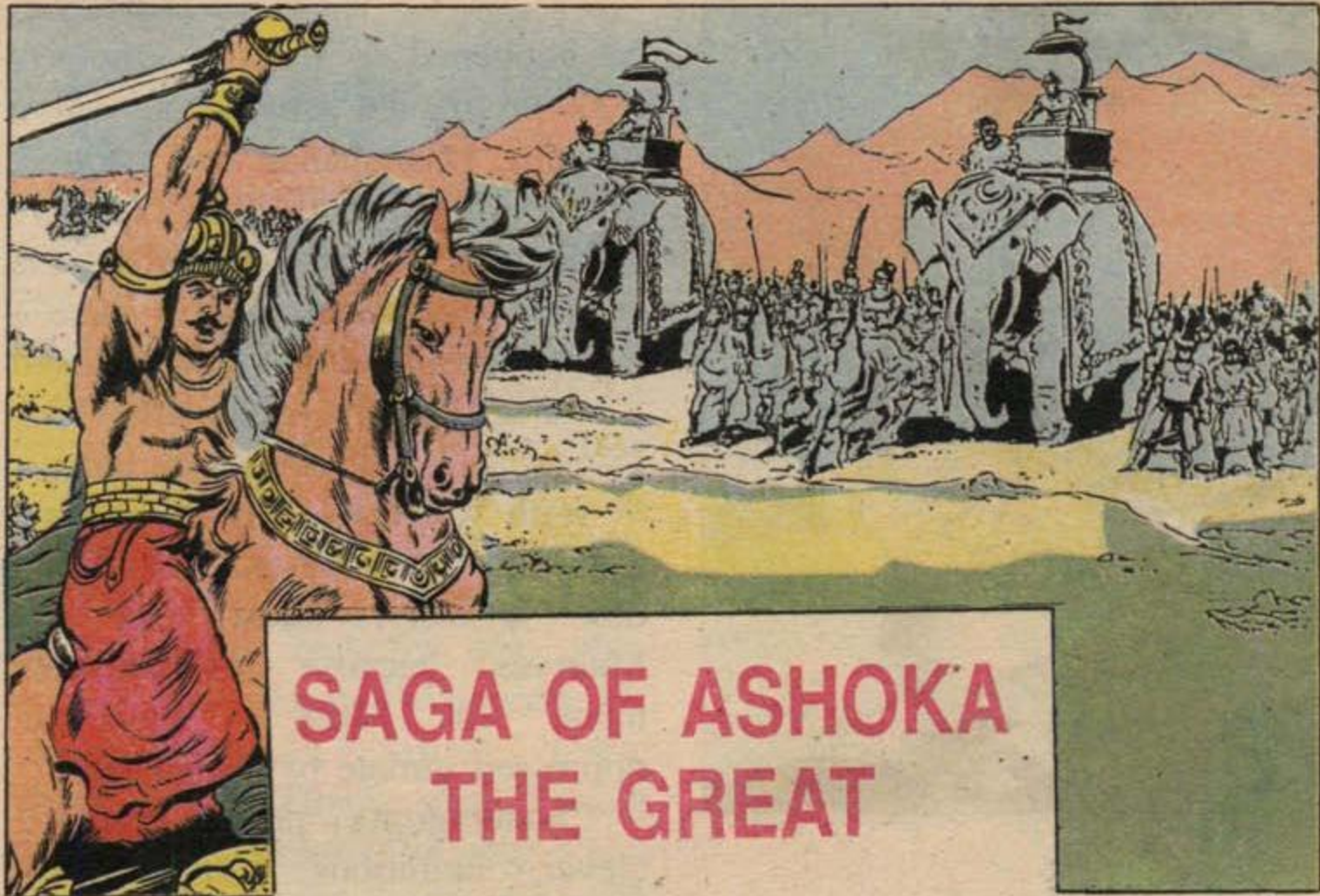
disappeared.

Shankar was listening to this conversation. "Your greed made us spend all our money in making all this sweetmeat. Ultimately what happened? What shall we do now? We've lost everything!" he wailed.

"Whatever has happened has happened!" remarked Shalini. "Now we can't go back to our village. Raju would have by now found out how we cheated him. He won't spare us. Come, let's go to my village!"

Shankar then drove the cart towards her village.

- **The man who feels that life is not worthwhile has usually neglected all the things in life that are worthwhile.**



The capital of the kingdom of Magadha was a magnificent city, rich with parks and orchards. Wide walks were flanked by trees bearing flowers and fruit. The citizens loved Nature. There were flowers aplenty everywhere, so much so a part of the city was known as Kusumpur, the abode of flowers, while the entire city was known as Pataliputra, after a particular variety of flower, Patali.

Two rivers, Ganga and Sone, flowed by the city. Close to the

confluence of the two rivers, a powerful king, Ajatasatru, had built a fort. That was some two thousand and five hundred years ago. Two centuries later, another powerful king, Chandragupta, expanded and strengthened the fort. The fort now had 570 towers and 64 gates.

Chandragupta was a prince who rebelled against the dynasty of the Nanda kings then ruling Magadha. Legends say that the royal household had humiliated him and his mother. In fact, the king's men

1. A BRIDE FOR THE KING



had been ordered to capture him and punish him. On time he had given them the slip. He then came face to face with the famous Greek hero, Alexander, who was in India on a military expedition. Such was the audacity of this young man that he even snubbed this famous and proud conqueror. When Alexander ordered him to be captured, he simply ran away at such speed that the Greeks pursuing him on their horses were unable to catch him.

But how could such a desperate and haughty young man have found his way to the throne of Magadha? Call it luck or a chance,

he happened to meet a scholarly brahmin named Chanakya, whom the king, Dhanananda, had insulted. The combination of Chandragupta's valour and Chanakya's wit did the miracle. They managed to raise a large body of soldiers and attacked the army of the unpopular king Dhanananda and overthrew him.

With Chanakya as his prime minister, Chandragupta founded a new dynasty, known as the Mauryas, because his mother's name was Mura — once an oppressed inmate of the palace.

Chandragupta proved himself clever, ambitious, and mighty. Alexander, who had in the meanwhile died, had expanded his empire upto Punjab. Chandragupta marched towards that part of the Greek empire and defeated its Greek custodians. Alexander's general, Seleucos, had become the ruler of the region. He hurried back to India to recover his lost territories, but Chandragupta routed his army in a terrible war. Seleucos succeeded in saving himself and his men by making a treaty with the young king. He also married off his daughter Athene to Chandragupta.

Chandragupta added to his kingdom several domains one



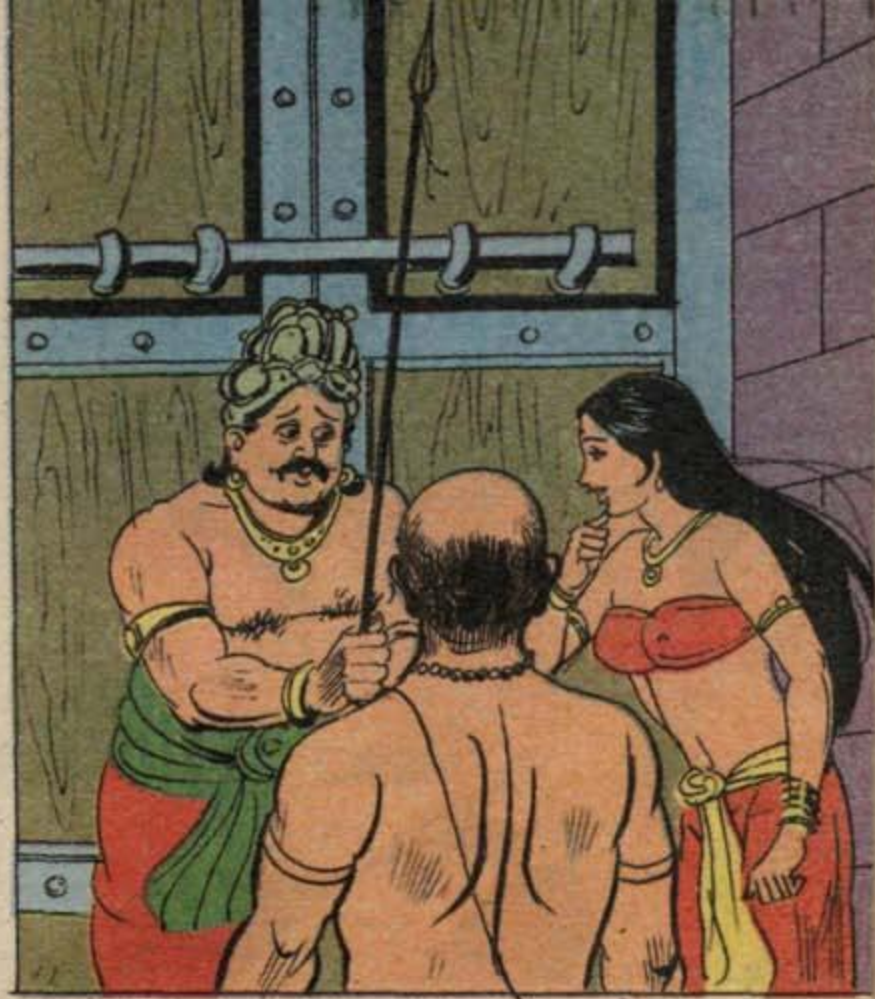
after another – Malava, Gurjara, Saurashtra, and more – and became the most illustrious king of his time.

He was succeeded to the throne by his son, Vindusara, an able ruler. Vindusara enjoyed the peace and prosperity secured through the labours of his father. Great cities like Taxila and Ujjain were the headquarters of important provinces.

It was during his reign that, one day, a poor brahmin was seen entering the city of Pataliputra. He came from a distant town, Champapuri. There was nothing unusual in strangers flocking into a city which was the centre of wealth and influence. But this brahmin was accompanied by a beautiful young girl and what is more, he sought an audience with the king!

The guards at the palace gate had a hearty laugh. "Who are you, Your Majesty – and who is Her Majesty – that the king must receive you?" they asked, teasing the traveller.

The brahmin felt like telling them, 'A day will come when you'll be obliged to address my daughter as Her Majesty, in all seriousness, even though you've the audacity to laugh at us today!' But, he kept his cool and said: "Well, my friends, I don't know how to secure an



audience with the king. Help me, if you please, and you'll have reason to feel happy in the future that you were my guides."

There was something very impressive about the man. Besides, the girl standing behind him was not only a great beauty, but also the very image of serenity. The chief guard came closer and asked, "Why do you wish to meet the king?"

"Please don't misunderstand me. I can reveal my purpose only to the king, and none else," replied the brahmin.

"That wouldn't do. You've to disclose your purpose, at least to





the minister," said the guard.

"It so happened that just then the sound of hoofs was heard. Someone was coming out of the fort. Nobody but the king himself had the right to ride through that particular gate.

"Clear out! Clear out!" shouted the guards. The sound was growing louder. The chief guard gave a push to the brahmin. The poor man dashed against his daughter and the girl fell down.

King Vindusar pulled the reins of his horse and stopped. He frowned on the guards who bowed to him. The brahmin got up and said, his voice trembling with

excitement, "My lord! Your guards are not to blame. I desired to see you. As I'm ignorant of the ways of the court, I was enquiring from them how to go about it."

"What business have you with me?" asked the king.

"I can tell you that only in confidence," said the brahmin.

Meanwhile, the girl behind the brahmin had got up. She greeted the king. The king viewed her with surprise. She was in soiled clothes and had not done her hair properly. But the king had till then not known any princess who looked more beautiful or more dignified than her.

As the king looked at her, she blushed and hung her head. The king dismounted and handed over the reins to a guard and went back into the fort signalling the visitors to follow him. He led them into a nearby room and asked, "What do you desire to tell me?"

"My lord, pardon me if I sound audacious," explained the brahmin. "I'm only working as a messenger of destiny. This child of mine was very young when a holy man saw her. He blessed her and told me that she was destined to be a queen. I had a hearty laugh after the holy man left us. Could there

a joke more cruel than such a prophecy? For the daughter of a poor man like me to be a queen! As my daughter grew up and I began looking for a bridegroom for her, an astrologer who studied her horoscope, exclaimed that she was destined to be an empress!"

The brahmin paused for a moment. The king looked at the girl with amazement. No doubt, she felt awfully embarrassed.

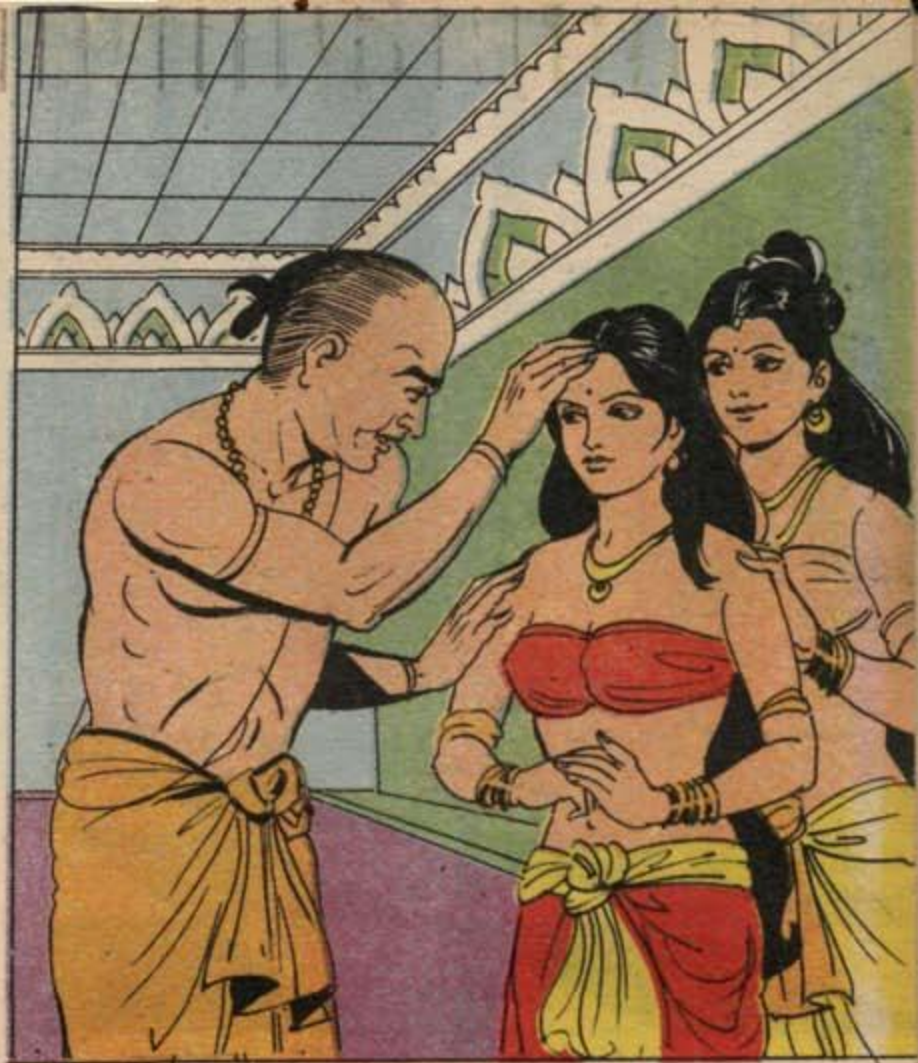
The brahmin resumed: "My lord, I've met the only emperor I know. I can see the hand of destiny even in my meeting you. Had you not come out of the fort and seen us, I don't know how I would have managed to meet you. Now, I offer my daughter, Subhadra, to you."

"But I've queens who would be senior to her even if I marry her. How then can she be the empress?"

"My lord, that I don't know," replied the brahmin.

The king was indeed charmed by the shy and beautiful daughter of the brahmin. But he had some urgent business to attend. He summoned the chief maid and asked her to take charge of Subhadra.

The maid hurriedly surveyed the girl with curiosity and envy and nodded, displaying a false smile.



"I'll be back soon," the king told the brahmin as he went out.

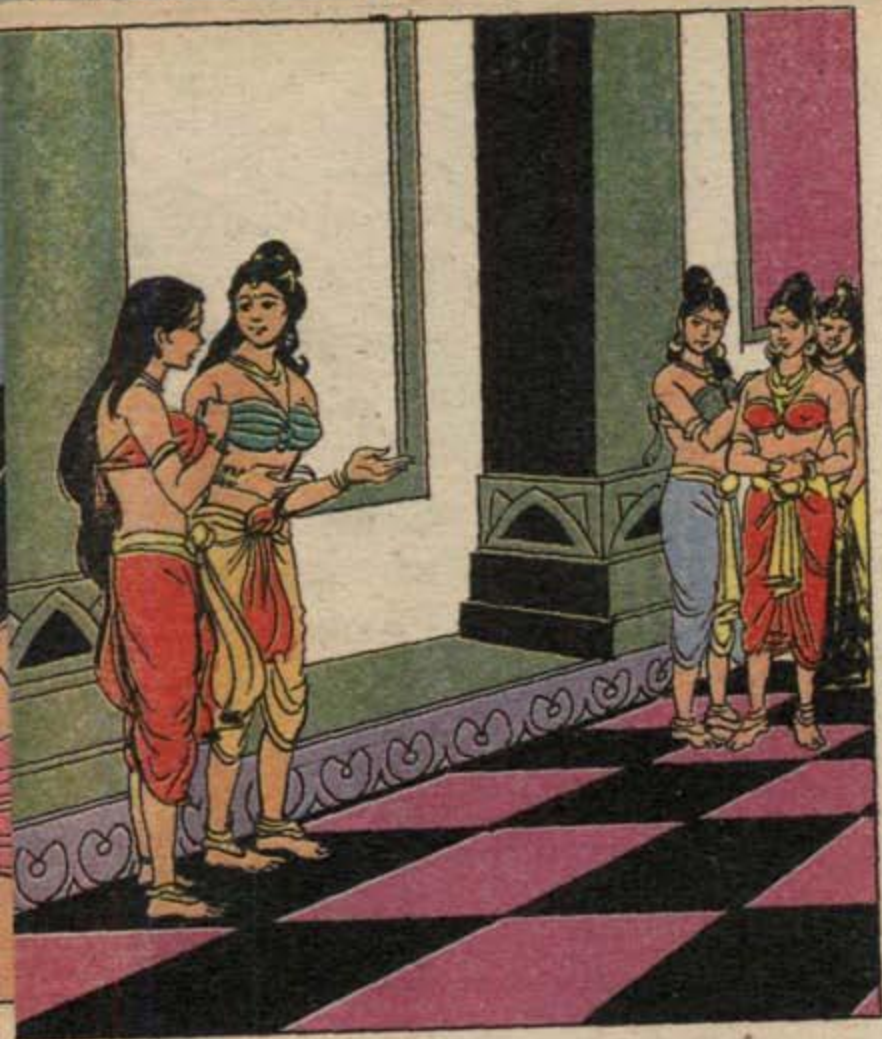
"O father!" exclaimed Subhadra looking at the brahmin who was now preparing to leave.

"My child, I shouldn't tarry here. If I do, some people might think that I offered my daughter to the king with the hope of some profit. But I've only done my duty," said he, caressing his daughter.

"Father, please don't leave me alone!"

"You aren't alone, my child," consoled the brahmin. "Your destiny is with you. It brought you here. It'll certainly look after you!"





The brahmin wiped his eyes and casting a remorseful look on his daughter, left the place hurriedly.

The maid gently led the weeping Subhadra away into the palace.

Soon, there was great excitement among the queens, their maids, and the female servants of the palace. While the three queens looked at her and goggled their eyes, their maids and servants exchanged whispers. "If the king is going to marry this newcomer, he would most certainly forget his other queens!" remarked one.

Another said, "I'm sure, this girl is a princess in disguise, if not a

nymph. I can't imagine her to be a rustic brahmin's daughter."

The three queens sighed and retired into their rooms. The chief maid showed Subhadra the room in which she was to live and gave her new clothes and food.

Next day, the king left for the frontiers of his empire in order to quell a rebellion by a few chieftains. He returned after two months. The chief maid used to look after Subhadra reasonably well, but when the king did not even enquire about her after his return, the maid knew that he had forgotten her. The queens were doing all they could, with the help of wizards, to make the king forget her, so that their share of the king's affection was not reduced. Under their influence, the chief maid began to treat Subhadra as a servant. After some time, she even compelled her to learn how to cut the toe-nails and finger-nails of the queens and the other ladies of the palace. Before long, the queens began to ill-treat her. She was even slapped for alleged negligence of her duty. She suffered all that in silence, neither grumbling about anything nor complaining to anybody.

Two years passed. One morning,

the king was enjoying a stroll in his private garden. Wishing to have a feel of the soft grass on the ground, he took off his slippers and walked barefoot. Suddenly, a thorn pierced his heel. He sat down on a marble bench and clapped his hands. A servant came running to him.

"Call a barber, quickly. Let him pull out the thorn!"

Barbers who served the royal household were experts at rendering such services, but no barber was available at hand.

"Rush to the king's aid, you, the queens' manicurist!" the servant shouted at Subhadra. Though feeling nervous, Subhadra approached the king, sat down on the ground, and took out the thorn with great tenderness.

"I don't think I've ever seen you before!" the king observed.

Tears welled up in Subhadra's eyes. She did not reply.

"How long have you been in the palace?" asked the king, puzzled to see her break into sobs.

"Ever since my father offered me to you, my lord!" she managed to say.

The king had a close look at her. The memory of his meeting her along with her father came back to him. At first he got furious with his chief maid that she never reminded him of her. Then he got angry with himself. After all, it was his own fault that he had forgotten her.

"For undoing the injustice that has been done to you, I'll marry you before the sunset, today!" he announced. He summoned his ministers and priests at once and asked them to make arrangements for the wedding. **(To continue)**



FROM AFRICA VIA SRI LANKA

The Tulip, a native of Angola in Africa, is reported to have gone to Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka) around 1870 and to have been later brought to India. It now grows in most parts of the world. It is widely seen in India. In Maharashtra, especially on the coastal areas, the tree is evergreen; in several other parts of the country, it sheds its leaves in summer.

The leaves are a dark green and appear in four to eight pairs of leaflets and opposite to each other. The cold season brings forth the flower buds, which are striking in colour—a beautiful olive green and velvety. They are seen in large bunches at the end of branches. The flowers, a bright scarlet in colour, last for a long time. The flowering season begins in September and lasts till May. Fruits appear only on the trees that grow in the hotter parts of India. They are long and pointed. The absence of fruits hinders reproduction of the tree. As the wood is soft, the timber is not of much use.

In English, the Tulip is also known as *Scarlet-bell* because of the scarlet bell-shaped flowers. When the buds are squeezed, they let out a large quantity of water, like a squirt. This has given it names like Fountain-tree or Squirt-tree. The scientific name is *Spathodea campanulata* - the first word referring to the spatula like calyx and the second meaning bell-like. The Tulip is a showy tree.



PARASARA

One day, a young prince was out hunting in the forest. While crossing a narrow path beside a hill, he came face to face with a sage named Saktri, a son of the illustrious sage Vasishta.

"Get out of my way!" shouted the prince.

"Why don't *you* move away, instead?" demanded the sage.

The infuriated prince struck the sage with his bow. The sage burst into uttering a curse, saying, "You're not behaving like a human being. You should acquire the instinct of the very first animal you will see!"

Just then a tiger passed by and the prince saw it. Instantly, he imbibed the instinct of the beast. What an irony it was that, looking this way and that way, the prince suddenly pounced on Saktri with the passion of a tiger and devoured him.

After that, the prince continued to behave like a demon.

Saktri's wife was pregnant. The child was not born for twelve years. Remaining in his mother's womb, he recited the Vedas; the sages around his mother could hear the chanting.

At last he was born. Parasara learnt the scriptures under the tutelage of

the renowned sages, Kapila and Pulastya.

By and by he learnt how his father had died. He organised a Yajna. At its culmination, all the demons and demoniac human beings were to get killed. However, his grandfather, sage Vasishta, dissuaded him from proceeding with its performance.

But the sacrificial fire was already burning. It could not be left where it was. Parasara hurled it into the Himalayas.

That is why, it is said, in the Himalayan region, flames suddenly rise high from time to time, destroying forests and causing the snows to melt.



DO YOU KNOW?

1. Which bird symbolises Peace?
2. Who was Britain's first woman Prime Minister?
3. Which is the biggest among the planets?
4. Why does the snakes sleep with its eyes wide open?
5. A large Indian bird seen only in Rajasthan eats snakes. Name the bird?
6. Where will you find 'prayer wheels'? Who uses them?
7. The Japanese have developed the art of flower arrangement. What is it called?
8. Which is the longest wall in the world?
9. Where will you go to see the Eiffel Tower?
10. Which liquid metal is used in the common thermometer?
11. Who was the first President of the United States of America?
12. Who invented the telephone?
13. What is known as the 'festival of colours'?
14. Which is the world's oldest religion?
15. What is the former name of Sri Lanka?
16. Name the tallest minaret in the world?
17. A woman Nobel Prize winner has made India her home. Who is she?
18. Where did the game badminton originate?
19. Gandhiji asked people to use handmade cloth. What did he call it?
20. Which river flows through Delhi?

ANSWERS

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. The dove | 11. George Washington |
| 2. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher | 12. Alexander Graham Bell |
| 3. Jupiter | 13. Holi |
| 4. Because it has no eyelids. | 14. Hinduism |
| 5. The bustard | 15. Ceylon |
| 6. The Buddhists in Tibetan monasteries. | 16. The Qutb Minar in Delhi |
| 7. Ikebana | 17. Mother Teresa |
| 8. The Great Wall of China | 18. India |
| 9. Paris, in France | 19. Khadi |
| 10. Mercury | 20. Yamuna |



CHILDREN IN THE NEWS



Birthday Gift

The birthday boy or the birthday girl usually receives gifts from friends and relatives. However, the presents can

sometimes spring surprises, too. Fifteen-year-old Praveen, of Taliparamba, in Cannanore district of Kerala, had a real surprise: a copy of a printed book containing nearly 108 of his own poems! He was aware that the collection was under print; but he never expected the book to be ready by the happy occasion. Poems, stories and other writings by children very often appear in their school magazines, children's magazines or children's supplements in newspapers. Full-fledged printed books are few and far between. Praveen, who is a tenth standard student of a Kendriya Vidyalaya, could not have received a better gift on his birthday. He has dabbled in writing poems in Hindi and Sanskrit also.

Tabla Talent

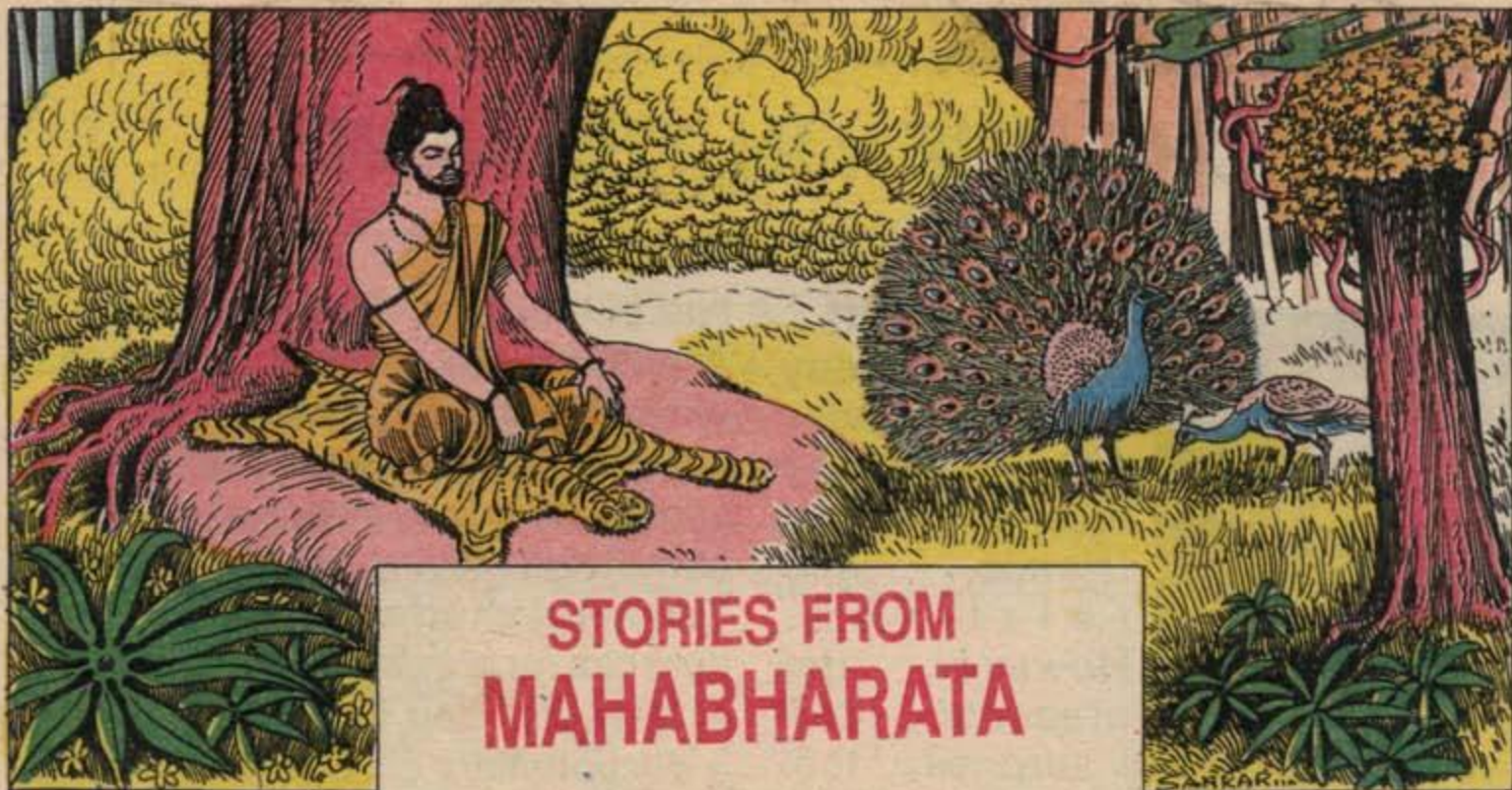
The minimum age stipulated for music recital—vocal or instrumental—on All India Radio is 16, but the authorities waived this rule for 12-year-old Deepak Mehta, of Delhi, who

has been given 'B' Grade rating by Akashvani. Six years ago, he began exhibiting his un-tutored skill on tabla. Later he was put under a teacher. He soon picked up all that he should know about tabla-playing. He won a National Talent Search scholarship which would help him receive training in tabla till he is 20 years. Zee TV is now preparing a documentary on Deepak. Will it go on the air on *his* birthday?

Indian Prodigy

The World Youth Chess Festival at Sao Lourenco, in Brazil, was meant for girls and boys between 10 and 14. Seven children represented India at this Children's Chess Championship. One of them was only 8 and special permission had to be sought for her participation. The International Chess Federation, FIDE, allowed Tania Sachdeva, of Delhi, to take part in the Championship. Wrote FIDE President: "I am delighted to give entry to Tania, an Indian prodigy." The President of the Asian Chess Federation described this as "a rarest honour by FIDE bestowed on Tania for her brilliance in the game."





STORIES FROM MAHABHARATA

The story so far...

As the great epic unfolds, one sees the growing enmity between the Pandava princes, and their cousins, the Kaurava princes. Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava princes, is induced into playing games of dice, by Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kaurava princes, and his uncle Sakuni, notorious for deceit.

At these fateful games of dice, Yudhishtira loses everything he possesses, and in accordance with the stakes, the Pandava princes accompanied by Draupadi have to endure twelve years of exile. Whilst in the wilderness Bhima kills the monster Kimmara. Krishna visits them and consoles Draupadi in her distress and gives sound advice to the brothers. The great sage Vyasa comes to their hermitage in the forest and advises Arjuna to acquire supernatural arms through penance. Arjuna goes to the Himalayas, where he meets the god Indra, who tells him that he must first win the blessings of Lord Siva.

A rjuna, refreshed by the words of the god, Indra, went further into the mountains, intent on doing penance to obtain the grace of Lord Siva.

Entering a glade that was filled with the scent of all the wild flowers and the song of thousands of birds, Arjuna sat underneath a great flowering tree, and began his medi-

tation on Lord Siva.

So deep and devout was his penance that all the sages of the forest went to the abode of Lord Siva and begged him to help this youth.

Lord Siva, under the guise of a huntsman and accompanied by his divine wife, Ūmadevi, entered the glade where Arjuna was meditating. At the same time, a huge wild bear

broke into the glade intent on charging at Arjuna.

Arjuna jumped to his feet, and fitting an arrow to his bow, let it fly at the boar. The huntsman, Lord Siva, also shot an arrow at the beast and the animal fell dead, transfixed with two arrows.

Arjuna turned on the huntsman and shouted in anger, "Who are you? And how do you dare shoot at the animal I was aiming at?"

"The animals in this forest belong to those who live in it," replied the huntsman in a contemptuous tone. "In any case, my arrow killed the boar, and if you think differently, you're welcome to fight it

out."

Nothing could please Arjuna better. He shot arrow after arrow at this arrogant huntsman, but to his amazement not even one arrow touched the stranger who just stood there, laughing in derision.

Undaunted, Arjuna rushed forward and struck at the huntsman with his Gandiva bow. But the bow was wrenched out of his hand with absolute ease. Arjuna then drew his sword, but at the very first stroke, the sword broke into pieces, and Arjuna began to doubt if the stranger was really any ordinary huntsman.

Bereft of his weapons, Arjuna



grappled with his formidable opponent, only to find himself clasped in an embrace that left him quite helpless.

Mortified at such a defeat, Arjuna humbly sought divine help and meditated on Lord Siva and, as he did so, the huntsman took on his original divine form, and released Arjuna from his iron clasp.

Arjuna fell at the feet of the Lord and, in a broken voice, begged for forgiveness.

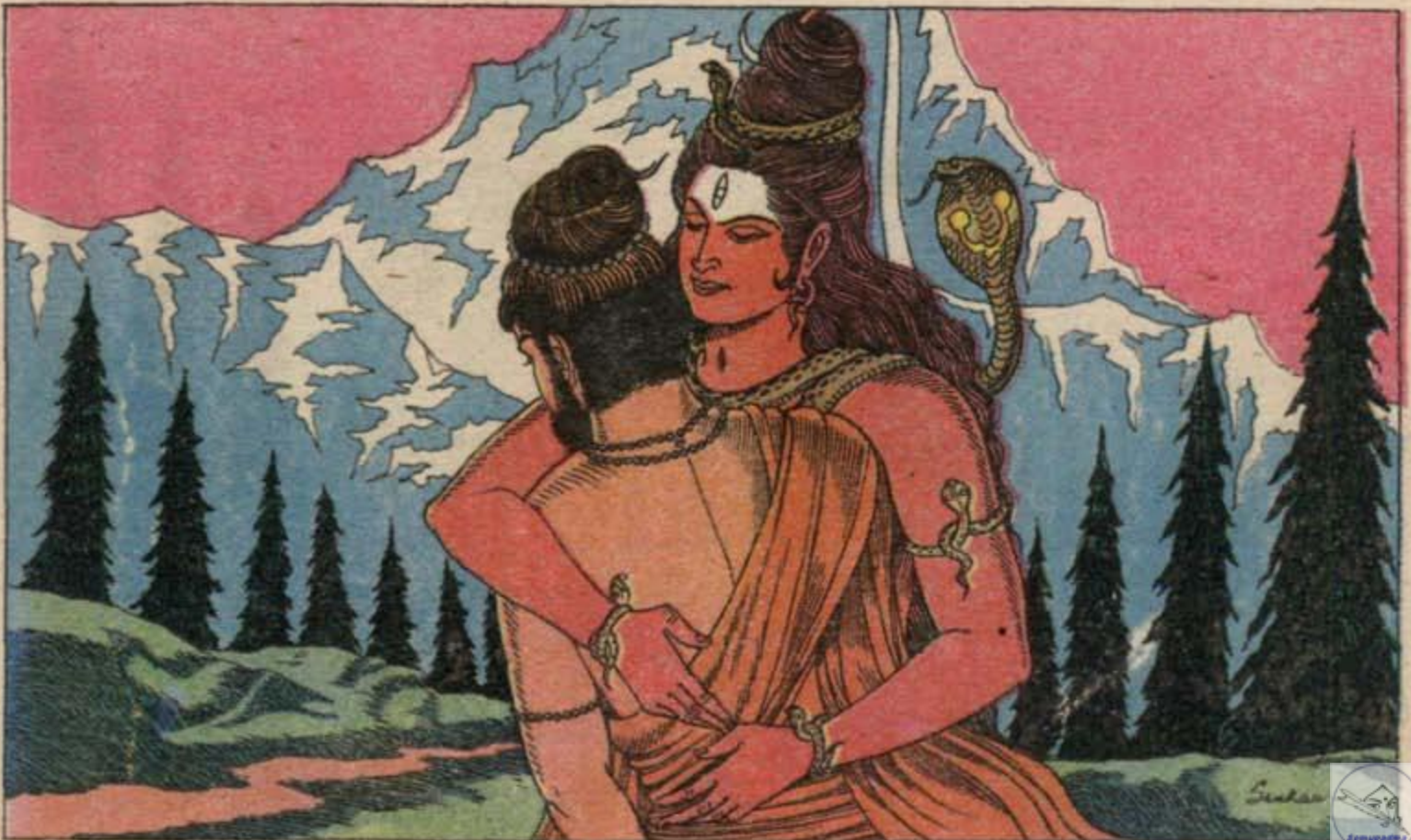
"I forgive you, my son," said Siva smilingly and gave him back his weapons. He also bestowed on Arjuna the coveted Pasupata arrow.

Arjuna was overcome with joy and could only gaze on Lord Siva with adoration, overwhelmed that he stood before the Lord face to face and had been blessed with His divine touch.

Lord Siva again embraced Arjuna, saying, "My son, you must now proceed to heavens and offer your obeisance to god Indra." Siva then vanished from his sight.

No sooner had Lord Siva disappeared than Matali, the charioteer of god Indra, descended with his chariot to carry Arjuna to the kingdom of the gods.

(To continue)



Bombay and Beyond



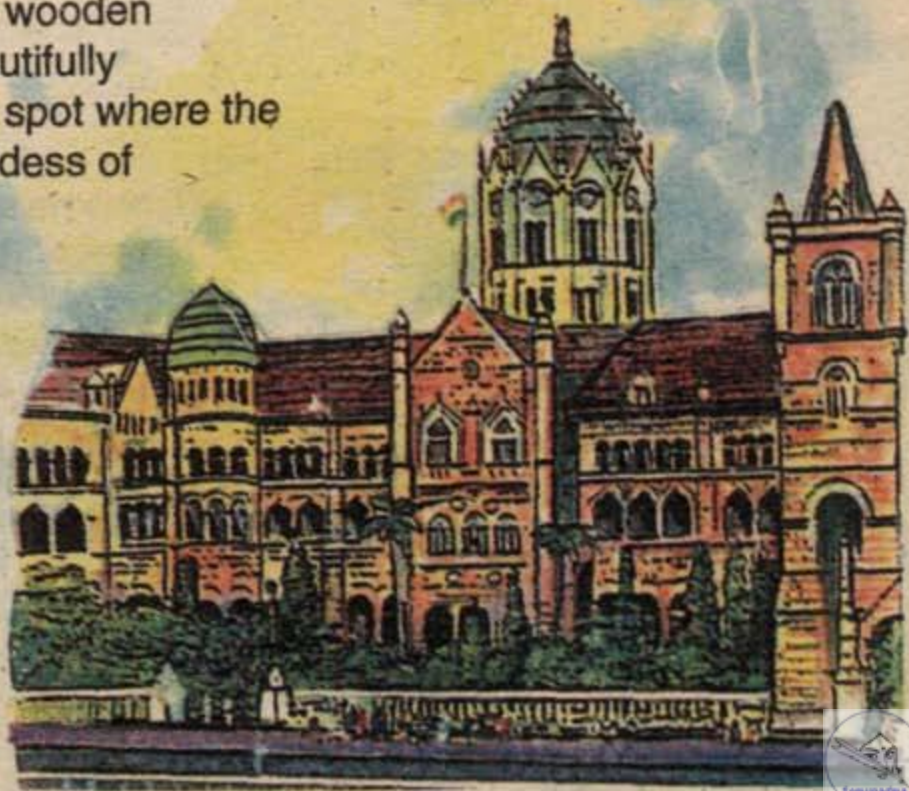
Text : Meera Nair
Artwork : Goutam Sen

The first railway journey

The country's first railway, the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, was born in the city of Bombay on April 16th, 1853. Thousands of people lined both sides of the tracks from Bori Bunder to Thane at half past three that afternoon and watched with wonder as the train chugged along with 400 passengers.

The Bori Bunder station, an old rickety wooden construction, was replaced by the beautifully architected Victoria Terminus at the spot where the temple of Mumba Devi, the patron goddess of Bombay, originally stood. The temple was shifted 3 km away.


From Bombay city to Elephanta, across the harbour, is a short journey by motor launch. Along the way one passes by Butcher island, named after Robin the butcher, who kept cattle for the British community of Bombay. Today, the island is a terminal for crude oil tankers.




Victoria Terminus

There are no elephants on Elephanta, only monkeys! When the Portuguese first set foot on the island sometime in the 16th century, they saw a large stone statue of an elephant on the beach. So they named the place Elephanta. The stone elephant was shifted to Victoria Gardens now known as Jijamata Udyan, during British times and can still be seen there.

After alighting from the jetty, and walking about half a kilometre, a steep flight of steps lead to a set of Siva temples, all of which have been hewn out of solid rock. The most impressive of these temples is the Great Cave. Facing one of the three entrances to this large man-made cave is a magnificent 5.45 m high, three-faced bust of Siva. This is the *Trimurti* which shows Siva as creator, preserver and destroyer.



One of the several damaged images in the temple



Elephanta's most famous image, the Trimurti, symbolising the three aspects of Siva — as creator, preserver and destroyer

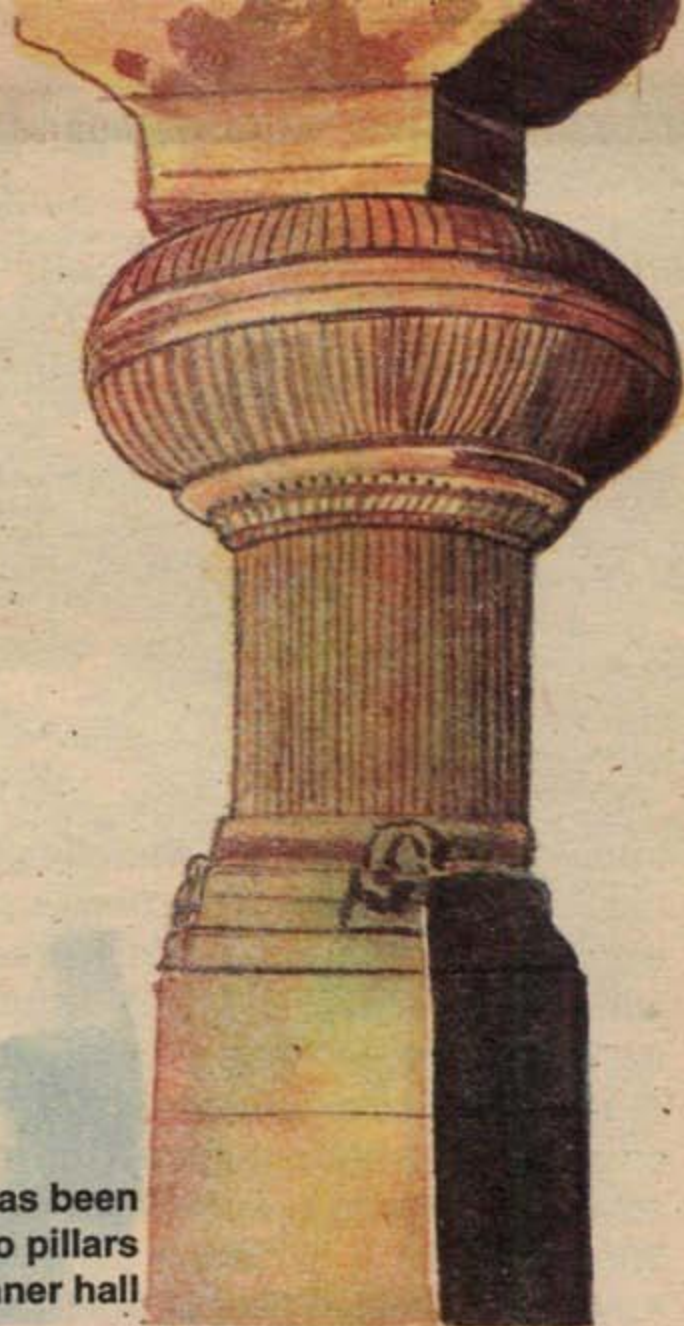
The stone friezes on the walls of the cave unfold a celestial drama, of which the most dramatic is that of Ravana trying to shake Kailasa, while a completely unperturbed Siva, continues to play the game of dice with his wife, Parvati, and holds the mountain down with his toe. The marriage of Siva and Parvati, 'Ardhanareshwara' or Siva as a half man - half woman and the descent of the Ganga are some of the friezes that have not been badly damaged.

The cave comes to life on Sivaratri and other Saiva festivals, when fairs are held during the day and cultural shows, late in the evening.

Quite close to the Great Cave are two badly damaged caves. On the other hill of the island lies yet another cave, called Sita Bai's Devala, which once had a beautiful gate and a marble porch. It is in a better state of preservation than the badly damaged caves on the first hill.

South of Elephanta, along the Konkan coast, lies Alibag, the favourite beach resort of Bombayites.

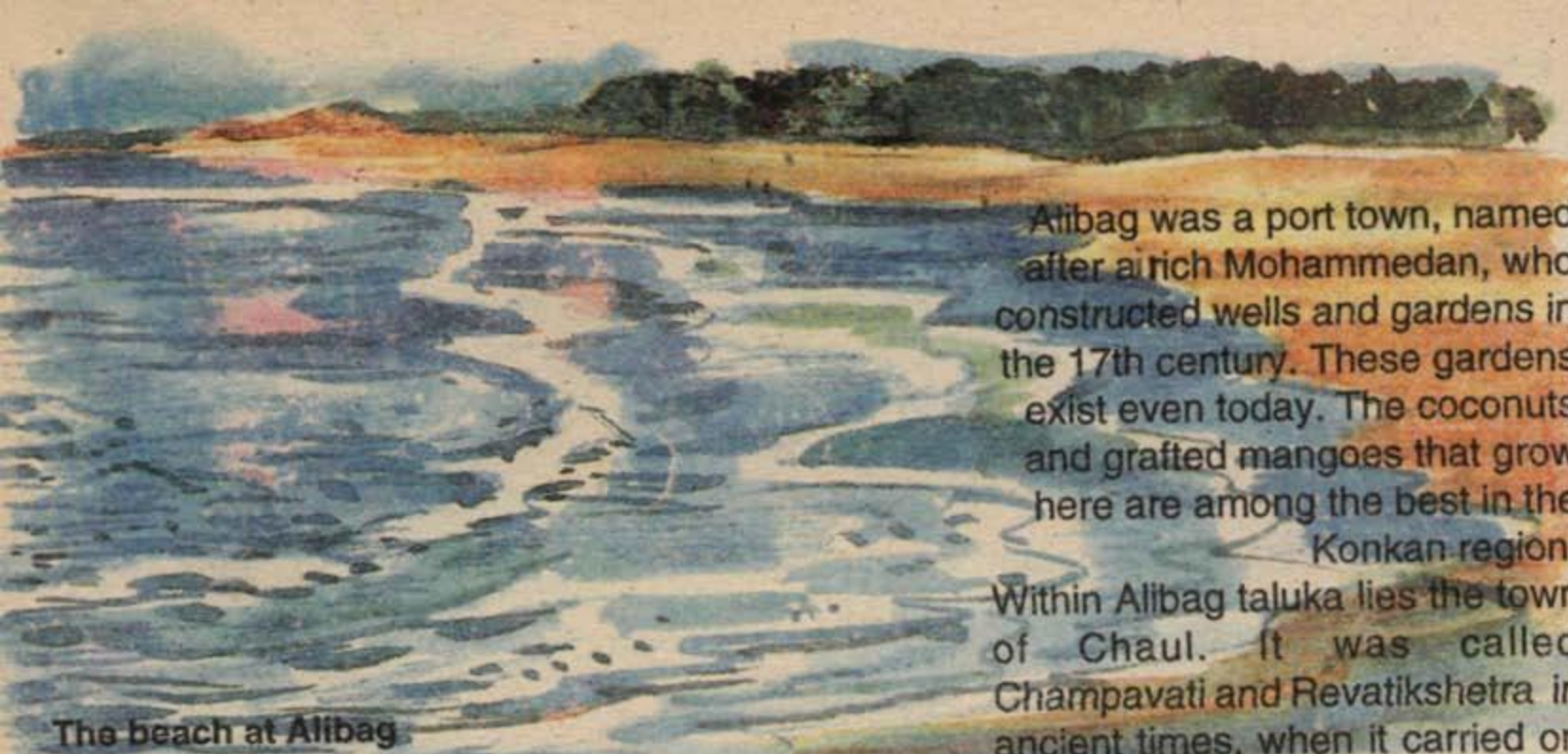
The rock has been fashioned into pillars in the inner hall



**The marriage of
Siva and Parvati**

Siva on Mount Kailasa





The beach at Alibag

Alibag was a port town, named after a rich Mohammedan, who constructed wells and gardens in the 17th century. These gardens exist even today. The coconuts and grafted mangoes that grow here are among the best in the Konkan region.

Within Alibag taluka lies the town of Chaul. It was called Champavati and Revatikshetra in ancient times, when it carried on

trade with the Romans. It was a flourishing port even in the 14th century. When the Portuguese occupied it, the port was known by its present name, and was well-known for its excellent harbour and extensive trade.

Miles south on a rocky island, stands the Fort of Janjira, whose walls rise abruptly from the water's edge to a height of 15 m. It was built in 1707 by an Abyssinian named Malik Ambar. How did an Abyssinian (Abyssinia is the old name for Ethiopia) establish himself on an island in Maharashtra? The story goes back to 1489. In that year, an Abyssinian adventurer posing as a merchant obtained permission from the ruler of the island to land 300 boxes on it. Little did the ruler realise that the boxes contained soldiers. The Abyssinians seized the island and retained their power till the final integration of the Indian states in 1947. They called themselves Sayyads. But this soon got corrupted to Siddi and their descendents are called 'Siddis'. The name *Janjira* too is a corruption of the Arabic 'Jazirah', which means 'island'.



The Fort of Janjira



A MATTER OF LAW!



Long long ago, there lived in a little hamlet two neighbours, a farmer and a woodcutter. The former was rich and proud, the latter poor and humble.

"Could you lend me your horse, dear friend?" one day the woodcutter asked the farmer.

"Why do you suddenly need a horse? I hope you aren't going to meet a princess by any chance?" asked the farmer, mockingly.

"Alas, the wheels of my cart have got embedded in the snow down the forest path. Won't your strong horse

be able to free them? If only I could afford one, I wouldn't have to draw my cart, heavy with firewood, all by myself," said the poor man.

"Very well, I'll lend you my horse on condition that you would provide me with wood for the next two months free of cost. You should know that my horse is the rarest of the rare breeds, with a beautiful tail that hangs down like a royal cloak. So, mind you, when you return the animal it must be hale and hearty, with not a single hair missing from its splendid tail," warned the farmer.



So, the poor man and the horse made their way to the spot where the cart was stubbornly stuck in mud and snow. Alas, the woodcutter had forgotten to ask for the horse-collar. How will the animal tow the cart? He did not want to go all the way back and fetch it. Suddenly his eyes fell on the horse's long and lovely tail, and a brilliant idea struck his mind.

He tied the tail as tight as he could to the handle of the cart and gave the animal a taste of the whip. The horse was a fiery one and it plunged forward with all his might. Alas, the wheels of the cart only shook and then settled back in their place as the

great tail of the horse came off its body.

When the farmer saw his handsome horse without its tail, he was naturally furious. He shrieked out: "You fool! You've ruined my prize animal! I'm not going to spare you so easily!"

In due course of time, the matter was reported to the judge. Before long both the woodcutter and the farmer were summoned to the court.

As they walked silently through the winding paths covered with snow, the poor woodcutter thought to himself, 'I'm sure to be found guilty. The farmer is rich and has influences. Alas, what will be my fate?'

As he was thus lost in a reverie, they were crossing a bridge without any handrail on its two sides. The poor man unmindfully stepped aside and fell off. Now it so happened that at that very moment a trader and his ailing father were driving on a sledge on the frozen river below. They were going to the town to see the doctor. The poor woodcutter landed straight on the old man killing him outright with only some bruises on himself.

"You wait here till I bury my father and pray for him. Then I'll take you to the judge to get you hanged!" threatened the angry merchant.

Soon the three reached the court in the town. The judge with a grey pate, beard, and a moustache, at once set about his business. He heard the case.

Now and then the poor woodcutter would glance at the judge and swing his bag to and fro, obviously with something very heavy in it. Then he hummed these words, as if they were part of a folk song:

*"O Master, take care of what you
say,
Look what I've brought to court
today.*

*It holds the fate of your pate so
grey,
This is all do I earnestly pray."*

He said this once, and he said it twice, and he said it a third and many more times. The judge, watching him intently all the while, said to himself: 'Perhaps, the bag contains a nugget of gold!'

He looked at the poor man and his bag for the last time and thought, 'Well, even if it is only a chunk of silver, it will at least fetch me a good amount of money!'

So the honourable judge, banging the wooden hammer on his table, began delivering the judgement:

Turning to the merchant he said: "As punishment, this hapless man will stand on the frozen river under



the very bridge. Then you're to leap on him from the bridge and kill him as he killed your father."

"Oh no!" exclaimed the trader with his hands on his head. "My good man, let's forget the whole incident. My jumping on you won't bring back my dear father to life!"

"The law is law. You must do as the judge has instructed you and jump on me from the bridge," insisted the other.

"Truly, I do not want to kill you. After all, it was only an accident. Here, take these thousand coins as a token of friendship," said the merchant shaking hands with the poor



woodcutter.

The farmer was closely watching the proceedings. He realised that the judge was favouring the woodcutter and his own case might also turn against him. He suddenly burst out, saying, "O honourable sir, I swear that my horse is too young to have grown a tail. I had completely forgotten about it."

"In that case, for falsely accusing your neighbour, your horse will remain with him till it grows a tail," said the judge.

"I don't mind my tailless horse. Would you give it back to me?" pleaded the farmer.

"How can I, dear friend? That'll be going against law! The horse will remain with me till it grows a tail!" replied the poor man.

"Then please take these thousand coins in exchange of the tailless horse," proposed the rich man.

"Very well. Let it be that way," agreed the woodcutter, and the matter was settled between them.

Now the poor happy man was about to leave with his bag slung over his shoulder when the judge called him aside. "Now, my good fellow, give me what you have been hinting to give!" he said, his eyes gleaming with greed.

The woodcutter opened his bag and slowly brought out a big round stone.

"I had picked this stone on my way to the court. Indeed, in my despair I thought of bringing it down on your pate!" said the woodcutter like a repentant confessor.

"It matters little if I haven't got the nugget of gold that I was dreaming of so long. At least my head is still intact!" sadly the judge consoled himself.

—Retold by Anup Kishore Das





New Tales of King Vikram and the Vampire

THE MAGIC MIRROR

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time; gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikramaditya did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought down the corpse. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground, with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "Oh King! You seem to be making untiring efforts and without respite, as if you wish to achieve something. I pity you. Instead of enjoying comfortable sleep on a cozy bed, you're still coming after me. By the way, do you expect to receive any award or reward for your efforts? Don't be so sure that you would get either of them. Do you know what happened to the prince



of Margpur? You must hear that story." The vampire then began his narration.

Mahasen was the prince of Margpur. When he was a boy, he stayed in the *ashram* of sage Mahendra to receive his education in arts, crafts, and the use of arms. He studied in the *gurukul* for four long years. The day came when he had to return to the capital on completion of his studies. He took leave of the sage. "I usually give every student of mine a gift at the time of departure. Here, take this mirror with you. It will tell you all about whoever stands in front of it.

Use it discriminately, wisely, and intelligently, and earn fame as a good, able king. And when you feel that the mirror has served its purpose, you may return it to me." The sage then blessed the prince.

Mahasen went back to the capital. A few years later he was crowned the King of Margpur. One day, he had three visitors. Bhoopathi was a wrestler; Dheer was a swordsman; and Veera was an expert in using the bow and arrow. They told the king: "Your majesty, nobody is able to tell us who is the greatest amongst us. We are told that you've a unique mirror with mysterious powers. Maybe it can help solve our problem."

The three then exhibited their skill before the king. Mahasen was at a loss to tell them who excelled the other two. He asked them to line up in front of the mirror and said, "Oh mirror! Pick up the best among these three."

In fact, that was the first time Mahasen was making use of the mirror to come to a conclusion. So, he had no idea how it would react or respond. Would it have the mysterious powers that it was supposed to have? Of course, sage Mahendra would not claim something if it did



not exist. In the meantime Mahasen and the other three were intently watching the mirror. Strangely, it did not react or pronounce anything. Mahasen was astonished. The three men went away disappointed.

A few days later, two wrestlers came from Kosala. Balabheema and Veerbahu had a similar question to pose to Mahasen: who was the better among them? They, too, had heard about the magic mirror and thought that it could help them solve their problem. They had a wrestling bout in front of Mahasen, and he held the mirror before them. "Oh, mirror! Tell us who is a better wrestler?" said the king.

Wonder of wonders! They could see some wavy formations on the mirror. When they stopped, the mirror said: "Veerbahu." Mahasen was very happy. After all, the mirror had not lost its powers. At the same time he was curious. "Oh, mirror, how did you pick up Veerbahu?"

The mirror answered: "Balabheema is wearing a talisman given to him by a magician, and so he would never lose a bout."

Balabheema felt ashamed. His face went pale. Veerbahu was angry. He pounced on Balabheema and caught hold of the talisman.



The chain broke and the talisman fell down. The two wrestled for some time, and Veerbahu could easily overpower Balabheema. The judgement of the mirror was proved correct.

Mahasen now felt proud of his *guru* and admired the powers of the mirror. He decided to make use of the mirror more often, though he was selective about using it. He did not seek its help for anything and everything. If he had, that would have been unfair to the mirror. He would put it to use only when he himself could not find the solution to a problem. He soon got an opportunity.





Margpuri had Sivagiri and Dhoulagiri as neighbouring kingdoms. Princess Shyamala of Sivagiri and Princess Radha of Dhoulagiri were both beautiful. Word about their beauty had spread far and wide. Mahasen called for their pictures, as he wished to marry one of them. But how to make a choice? He sent a communication to the two kings, inviting them to come to Margpuri and spend a few days with him.

Both kings accepted his invitation. Mahasen accorded a warm welcome when each of the kings arrived in Margpuri with their fami-

lies and entourage. Elaborate arrangements were made for their comfortable stay. A few days later, he told them: "I had seen the pictures of both Shyamala and Radha, and I have now met them personally as well. However, I'm not able to decide who is more beautiful. I've a magic mirror, and I'm sure it'll come to my help. The princesses have merely to stand in front of the mirror. Would they agree?"

Shyamala got up from her seat and went and stood before the mirror. Radha did not. She protested: "I now realise that the King of Margpuri is blind; I don't like to marry such a person." Her father, the King of Dhoulagiri, was taken aback by Radha's protestation. He was afraid, their host might take exception and become angry.

Mahasen was listening to Radha. He did become angry, but only for a few moments. He was calm and cool later. He turned to the King of Dhoulagiri. "I like your daughter very much. If she, too, likes me, you may arrange for our wedding."

Everybody was surprised when they heard Mahasen's decision. Before long his wedding to Princess Radha took place with great pomp and show. Margpuri reverberated

with music and dance in honour of Mahasen and his bride. The people were very happy, especially because Mahasen was a popular ruler and he had endeared himself to his subjects. He and Radha went round accepting the people's greetings and good wishes.

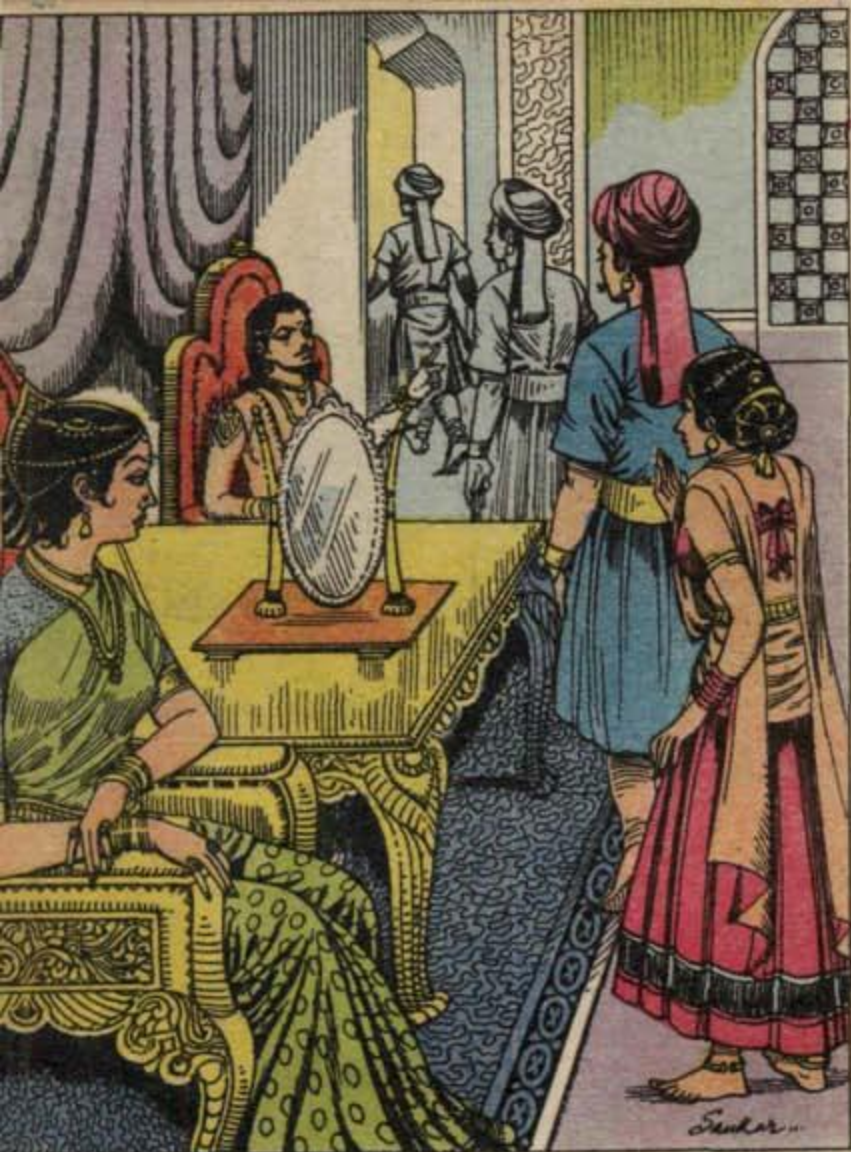
The revelries were suddenly called off. Queen Radha's diamond necklace was missing. One of the palace guards had stolen it and hid it in the hollow of a banyan tree in the royal garden. Mayan thought he could safely remove it from the tree at a convenient time later. However, a maid of the queen was eyewitness to Mayan's operation. Without his knowledge, Amrita pulled out the necklace from the hollow and surreptitiously took it home. Everybody was aghast. A thief inside the palace was something unimaginable. The king was known for his munificence and gave away generously; so, why should anybody think of stealing anything from the palace? The palace was well-guarded, and no thief from outside could gain entry. So, the suspicion narrowed down to the guards themselves; or one of the maids, and nobody else, concluded Mahasen. However, he waited for



some evidence before he took any action. He decided to take the help of the magic mirror. He asked the maids and the guards to stand in front of the mirror one by one.

The mirror did not react for sometime. Then, when Mayan the guard came before it, it said: "Thief!" Maid Amrita was then standing beside the queen. Her face glowed. This was noticed by Radha. One's face is also a mirror! But it is no magic mirror. It only reflects what is in one's mind. The mind can then be read, so to say. The tongue can utter a lie; but the face reflects the truth. The queen





ordered that Amrita be taken captive.

Later, when she was brought before the king, she fell at his feet and prayed for pardon. She explained: "I saw Mayan hiding the necklace in the hollow on the tree. Without his being aware of it, I pulled it out and took it home." She was sent home to fetch the diamond necklace.

Mahasen took the necklace to Radha and handed it to her. He was all praise for her intelligence. "This mirror has some magic powers. It has its advantages, but it can also play foul. We realised that today.

So, I am taking it back to my guru." The king proceeded to the ashram of sage Mahendra and returned the mirror.

The vampire ended his narration and turned to King Vikramaditya. "Oh King! The magic mirror failed to identify the best among Bhoopathi, Veera, and Dheer. In the case of the diamond necklace, the mirror pointed at Mayan as the thief. That shows, the mirror is not capable of functioning properly at times. Why did Radha refuse to stand in front of the mirror? She called Mahasen a blind person. Still he was ready to marry her. Why? Also why did he think that the mirror could play foul sometimes? If you know the answers to these questions of mine, and yet do not satisfy me, need I tell you what'll happen to you? Your head will be blown to pieces!"

Vikram thought for a while and said: "The mirror had unique powers. There's no doubt about it. But it had some limitations. All the three heroes were equally good in their own discipline—wrestling, swordsmanship, or in wielding the bow and arrow. That's why the mirror refused to oblige at that time. Radha was against depending on a





mirror to decide who was more beautiful. She was right in calling Mahasen a blind person. He understood her point and admired her for that. In the case of the necklace, Mayan was the one who actually stole it from the queen's chambers. So, the mirror pointed at him as the thief. Amrita the maid was only trying to escape punishment for her

misdeed. So, Mahasen realised that the mirror had its own advantages and limitations. He, therefore, returned it to the sage."

The vampire knew that he had been outwitted once again. He flew back to the ancient tree carrying the corpse with him. The king drew his sword and went after the vampire.

- **There is always a right way and a wrong way to do anything. I try to discover the right way.**
- **Sticks and stones may break my bones; but words can never hurt me.**

ONCE UPON A TIME, A BRAHMIN WAS WALKING THROUGH A FOREST WHEN A FIEND SAW HIM FROM A TREE.



THIS FELLOW WILL SERVE MY PURPOSE NOW.



THE BRAHMIN SOON APPROACHES THE TREE. THE FIEND JUMPS ON HIS SHOULDERS.



WHAT'S THIS? WHO'RE YOU?



AH HAI I'M THE GREAT KING OF FIENDS. NOW WALK ON!



MY GOD! I'M DOOMED! HOW CAN I SAVE MYSELF?



THE FRIGHTENED BRAHMIN WALKS ON WITH THE FIEND ON HIS SHOULDERS. AFTER SOME TIME...



IT'S QUEER! THE FIEND'S FEET ARE SOFT, LIKE BUTTER.



MY DEAR SIR! IF YOU DON'T MIND, MAY I ASK YOU A QUESTION?



GO AHEAD, ASK!



SIR! YOUR FEET ARE TENDER LIKE LOTUS FLOWERS. HOW?



Work which is not done by suitable methods will fail, though many people may uphold it.

—Thirukkural



LONG AGO I TOOK A VOW
NOT TO TOUCH THE
GROUND UNTIL I WASH MY
FEET IN YONDER LAKE.



I CAN'T WALK NOW AS
THEY BECAME TENDER.



SIR! I SHALL GLADLY TAKE
YOU THERE.



THIS GIVES ME AN IDEA!



THEY SOON APPROACH
THE LAKE.



HEY! TAKE ME TO THE
VERY EDGE OF THE LAKE.



NOW, YOU STAY ON THE
BANK HERE TILL I WASH
MY FEET AND OFFER
PRAYERS TO MY GOD.



POOR FELLOW! HE
DOESN'T KNOW THAT
HE'LL BE KILLED AFTER MY
BATH.



THE FIEND WILL KILL ME
AFTER HE COMES BACK.
I'LL RUN AWAY. HE DARE
NOT FOLLOW ME.



THE MINISTER CON-
CLUDES THE STORY
THUS.



SO, THE CLEVER BRAHMIN
FORESAW THAT THE FIEND
COULD NOT PURSUE HIM
BEFORE HIS BATH ON AC-
COUNT OF THE VOW.



Give to the poor and live with praise; there is no greater profit for
man than that.



Wealth gained by the unlearned will give more sorrow than the poverty which may come upon the learned.



AND IMMEDIATELY LEAVE HIS COUNTRY WITH HER FOR GOOD!

WHY NOT I TRY? NO-BODY CAN EVER GET A CHANCE LIKE THIS!

YOU FOOL! SHE HAS A HORN ON HER FORE-HEAD!



MY GOD!

WHOEVER MARRIES HER COURTS DEATH.



MANY YEARS PASS. THE PRINCESS IS NOW A YOUNG WOMAN. NONE COMES FORWARD TO MARRY HER.

NO ONE LIKES TO LEAVE HIS NATIVE LAND.



ONE DAY, A HUNCHBACK AND A BLIND MAN COME TO KNOW ABOUT THIS. THEY ARE FRIENDS.



LET'S GET THE GOLD WHICH THE KING OFFERS.

IT'LL END OUR POVERTY. WE'LL BE HAPPY EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T LIVE LONG.



TO HIM WHO IS HUNGRY ALL PLEASURES OF LIFE WILL SEEM WORTHLESS.



I'LL MARRY THE PRINCESS, AND WE SHALL LIVE HAPPY WITH THE GOLD.

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT!

There is nothing difficult for anyone to do, if only he acts with the right instruments at the right time.



Cooperative action

What is the meaning of synergy?

—Anita Singh, Nagpur

The word simply means combined action, like the cooperative action of two or more muscles or nerves on our body, or the cooperative action of two or more drugs. When people work together, they become synergetic; when drugs (medicines) are taken together, it increases each other's effectiveness. In physiology and medicine, when a part of the body cooperates with a medicine (like applying a soothing balm on the part which suffers pain), the combined action can be called synergy.

What is meant by the idiom 'to turn king's evidence'?

—Krishna, Parameswar and Santosh, Dhenkanal

When an accomplice in a crime agrees to testify against the perpetrator of the crime, or in other words becomes a witness for the prosecution, he is supposed to turn state's evidence. This act is called 'to turn king's/queen's evidence' in Britain. In simple legal parlance, such a person is called an approver.

What is 'mother wit'?

—Jyoti R. Biswal, Durgapur

Any natural or practical intelligence or common sense is known as mother wit. Whenever a little child is seen putting anything tiny, like a stone or a button, into its mouth or nose, its mother instinctly holds the baby upside down by its legs and gives a few hard taps on its back to help it throw out the stuff. This is an instance of mother's instinct or mother wit.

NOTE: Readers are requested to desist from sending questions like 'What is the difference between *wait* and *await*, between *discovery* and *invention*, between *imprudent* and *impudent*? Any good dictionary should be able to provide the answers. — Editor



A Test Too Much

The wedding of Princess Jayamala of Videha was announced. Invitations were sent to all the neighbouring kingdoms, especially those with eligible princes, to be present at the 'swayamvara' ceremony. Agnimitra, the Prince of Angadesa, had heard of Jayamala's beauty and had cherished a desire to make her his wife. So, he reached Videha before everybody else. He had an occasion to see her portrait and thought that she was not any ordinary beauty, but had a divine charm about her. He was very eager to marry her.

There were a few more days left for the grand occasion. Prince Agnimitra wondered how he would spend the next impatient days. He knew of all kinds of royal pleasures and hobbies, but all that would need companions. Princes and kings from other countries were yet to arrive. Suddenly, an idea struck him. He

would visit a neighbouring country and go round its capital.

It was a fascinating place. He roamed, enjoying the sights and intermingling with the people. A notice-board attracted his attention. "YOUR FUTURE AND FORTUNE! BIRD-ASTROLOGER! FEES: ONE GOLD COIN". The prince was curious. Would the bird tell him whether Jayamala would choose him from among her suitors? If he could get an answer for a single gold coin, why shouldn't he try? He went inside the house and placed a coin in front of a cage. Inside was a long-tailed parrot. He found to his amazement that it could speak.

"Oh, Prince of Angadesa! Come in! Come in! You're a blessed person. Princess Jayamala is to wed you. She is dear to us, and so you're our friend. God bless!"

Agnimitra stood speechless. He wondered: How did the bird know his

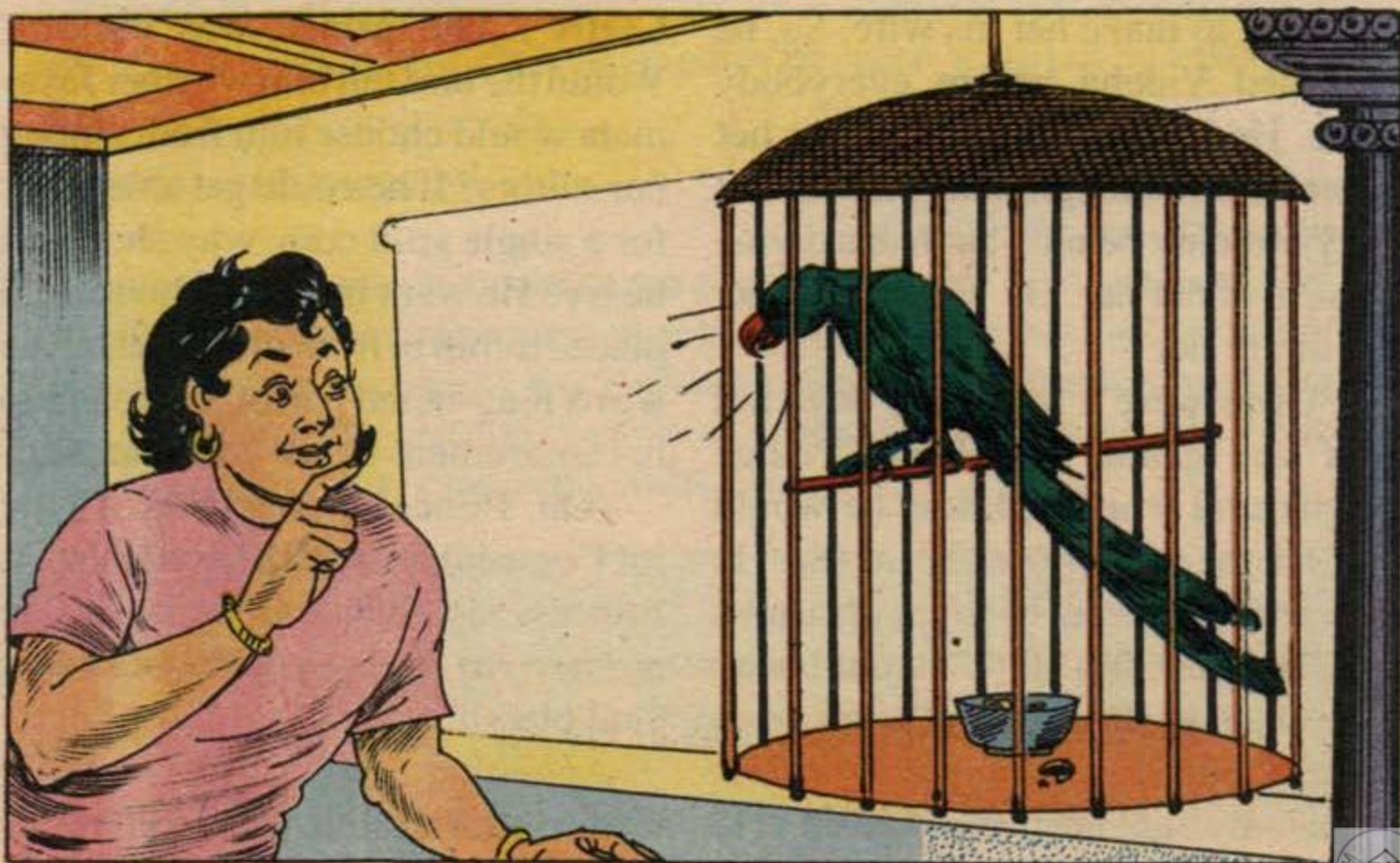
identity, call him by his name, and guess that he had come to attend the swayamvara? Perhaps the bird surmised all that from his royal attire. He went back to his chambers. He should test the bird again. The next day, put on ordinary clothes. He looked very simple. Nobody would recognise him as a prince, much less a bird.

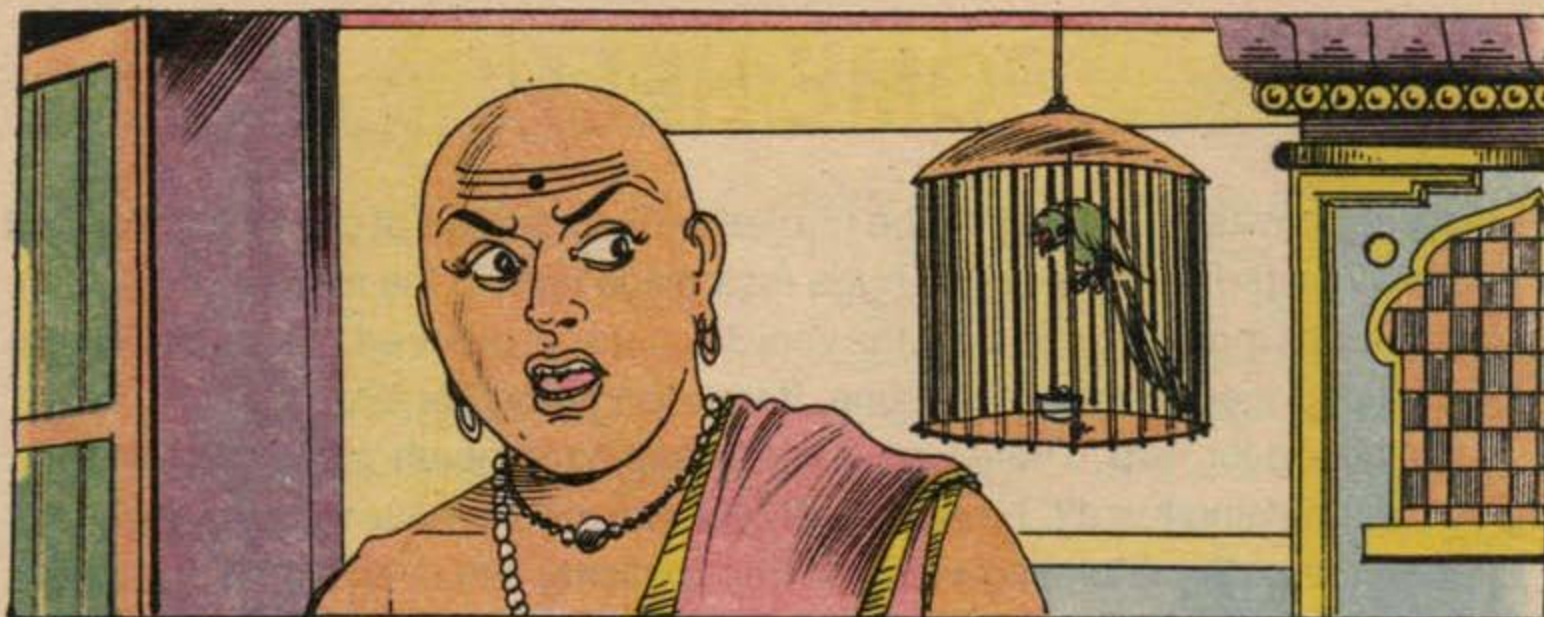
He walked back to the place and entered the house. He once again placed a gold coin in front of the cage. He stood before the cage in all humility, waiting for the bird to respond. "Oh! Prince of Angadesa! Agnimitra, you wish to marry Princess Jayamala. You're our friend. May God

bless you!" The bird's prophecy this time was no different from that of the earlier occasion.

The prince could not believe his ears. Though he was devoid of any royal dress and regal jewellery, the bird could easily recognise him and fathom his mind. She did not make any mistake. However, Agnimitra was not quite satisfied. For the time being he forgot the purpose of his visit; he even forgot the day and time of the wedding. He must test the bird once again.

He returned to his chambers and the next day he put on the attire of a priest—a long *dhoti* and a shawl, shoulders, ash marks on his forehead—





and wore a necklace of holy beads. He looked a real priest. He entered the house, placed a coin in front of the cage, and waited with bated breath for the bird's pronouncement.

"Oh, Prince of Angadesa! Come in! Come in! May God bless you!" began the bird as usual. "You've come with the hope of marrying Jayamala. A while ago, the auspicious hour went by and the princess has chosen Prince Badal of Bundelkhand. You forgot the very purpose of your visit to Videha and spent your time testing me and my capabilities, and missed a golden opportunity to wed whomever you had wished to. You were not the only foolish person; five other princes also met with almost the same fate. Anyway, I am grateful to you for the fees

of three gold coins that you paid me!"

Prince Agnimitra was shocked beyond belief. He was foolish enough to forget his mission by testing the talents of a bird. And it would be a shame if others were to come to know about his fate. He did not dare go back to his chambers in Videha, so he returned to Angadesa, frustrated. What made him act so foolishly? he wondered. Who could he blame for his foolishness, except himself? If anybody in the palace were to hear about his experience, what would they take him for? What explanation would he—a future king—give? He came to realise that if one has a definite purpose or aim, he must pursue it with single-minded devotion and not deviate from it.

- Wounds heal, but not ill words.
- Hear twice before you speak once.



SOME HELP!

Murugappa was on his way to the market with a cartload of pumpkin. The cart suddenly halted as there was a huge rock piece right in the middle of the path. Unless it was moved to one side, the vehicle could not proceed. He got down from the cart and tried to move the stone. It was too heavy for him.

He looked for help. There was a man sleeping beneath a tree. "Sir, will you give me a helping hand?" he said loudly. "Some rogues have rolled a huge rock right on the path preventing vehicles from passing. I'm in a hurry. I'm taking a cartload of pumpkin, and I must reach the market early. Will you please help me move the rock?"

The man got up slowly and walked up to the rock. Between the two, they were able to move it to one side. Murugappa was happy. "Where are you going?" he asked of the man, who mentioned the place. "That's on my way. Please get in, I shall leave you there," he said, obligingly.

When they reached that place, he stopped the cart to allow the man to get down. He smiled at Murugappa. "I myself had placed the rock there! I knew someone would come that way and need my help. Anyway, thank you for the lift." He then walked away.



SPORTS YESTERDAY TODAY TOMORROW

FIRST WORLD CUP

The World Cup Cricket is to be inaugurated on February 11 at Calcutta. Eden Gardens will have a "House Full" board, from the way tickets have disappeared from the booking counter. Millions of others, in India and elsewhere, will sit before their TV sets for hours for the following one month till the final is played. How many of them—especially Cricket fans in India—will remember India's first game in the first World Cup played at Lords, between India and England? India scored just 123 runs for 3 wickets against England's 334 for 4 wickets. Sunil Gavaskar was 36 not out at the end of the game and, mind you, he was the opener and played through all the 60 overs! His only wish at that time was that he should forget his dismal innings. England's Denis Amis scored 137 to earn the title of 'first centurion' in World Cup. The day was June 7, 1975.

India's next match was with South Africa and we won the game, restricting South Africa's score to just 120 runs. The highlight was Bishan Singh Bedi's record haul of 6 wickets conceding only 1 run in 12 overs. The third match was with New Zealand. India were all out for 230 runs, including 70 by Abid Ali. But New Zealand won by 4 wickets. Glen Turner hit 114. India were out of World Cup reckoning. West Indies annexed the Cup by defeating Australia by 17 runs.

YOUNGEST

A Chandigarh school girl has become India's youngest ever Golf champion. In the SIEL 28th Northern India Ladies Championship held in New Delhi, 15-year-old Parmita Garwale finished first with an aggregate of 313 strokes. Delhi's Anjali Chopra came second with 310.

BACK AND FORTH

Son of a retired officer of the Indian Navy, 22-year-old Sukhbir Singh on January 9 swam a distance of 105 km between the Gateway of India (Bombay) and Dharmatar *thrice* in 32 hours to create a unique record.

SMOKE-LESS

Atlanta, U.S.A., venue for the 1996 Olympic Games, where the centenary of the modern Olympics will be celebrated, will be out of bounds for smokers. No visitor to the stadium will be allowed to smoke when the events are on. Cigarettes, lighters, and match boxes will not be permitted inside. Checking will be very strict. In the last Games held in 1992 in Barcelona, Spain, the authorities had tried to prevent smoking. But the sports correspondents from Japan objected. This time an assurance has come from them that they will not carry cigarettes into any of the stadia.





ABRACADABRA

Kaladharan was a young man. He lived by the sea coast. He wished to go to another country and earn a living. One day he managed to board a ship which was carrying merchandise. Unfortunately, the vessel was caught in a storm, and it sank in midsea. It is said, 'Man proposes, but god disposes!'

Most of the people on board drowned when the ship sank. Kaladharan was fortunate. He caught hold of a driftwood and clung on to it. The waves took him to an island. It was a strange place because there was no living being on it – man, animal, or bird – except tall palm trees. With some difficulty he climbed one of the trees which stood as near the shore as possible. He plucked a coconut and drank its milk, and ate the kernel. He thus appeased his thirst and hunger.

Kaladharan climbed another coconut tree and made a survey of the

place. From one side he could see the vast stretch of the sea. On the other sides he could see only the tops of coconut trees. Suddenly, his attention was drawn towards something dark floating in the water. There were quite a large number of them. They were floating towards the shore. A while later, he had a better view of them. They were wild pigs!

The whole horde landed on the shore and in no time they were all asleep. Kaladharan decided that he should escape their attention and run far away from them. And as they slept, it was an opportune moment. Without making any noise, he climbed down and slowly walked past them. It was then that he noticed something sparkling lying beside each one of them. Diamonds?

He made sure that they were asleep and he did not by any chance wake them up. He approached one of the

animals and cautiously picked up a large diamond. He turned it this way and that. He had no doubt: it was a diamond. If he were to collect a few of them, he could easily become a wealthy person.

Suddenly the animal woke up and eyed him with curiosity. It did not stir or stand up to attack him. Did the diamonds help the pigs to swim long distances in the sea? he wondered. So, they must be having some mysterious powers. He once again climbed a tree to watch further movements of the animals.

He now saw the pig coming near the tree he had climbed, looking up, and letting out an angry growl. He plucked a coconut and aimed at the animal. It was hit on the head and the animal fell dead. Kaladharan climbed down and then ran for his life before the other animals woke up and followed him.

What he did not know was that the pigs were actually wizards who had taken the animal form. So, now one of them was no more. And the diamond was safe in his possession. What he also did not know was that there were other wizards on the island!

He held the diamond tight, and waited for some mysterious developments. Suddenly he began rising from



the ground! Up and up he went, and he was now flying. He saw smoke at a distance and thought that there must be some human habitation. He slowly came down and landed on the ground. He saw some huts. In front of one of them he saw a lame roasting some animal – perhaps a calf. "I'm hungry. Will you give me something to eat?" he asked the man. "And will you permit me to stay here for the night?"

He gave Kaladharan a few pieces of meat on a plate, and watched him eat. It was evident that the man was suspicious. His question corroborated Kaladharan's doubt. "How did you come here?"





Kaladharan explained all that had taken place, and showed him the piece of diamond. The lame was attracted to the glittering stone. If he were to possess it, he could move about with the help of its magic powers even though he was lame. "Look here! I'm lame. You give me that diamond and I shall give you a magic axe. You've only to tap its handle and give a command. It'll give anything you want; it'll even go and kill anyone if you so wish."

Kaladharan agreed. "All right, you give me the axe; I shall then give you the diamond." He held the diamond in one hand and extended the other

hand to receive the axe. The moment it was placed in his hand, he tapped its handle and commanded: "Kill him!" The command was carried out the next moment.

Now he possessed both the diamond and the magic axe. He started walking. Soon it was dark. He saw another hut and went inside. There was a man without arms. When he saw the intruder, he grabbed a pot with this mouth and then tilted it. The water in the pot spilled over and ran towards Kaladharan like a river. In no time there was water all over, like a flood.

The armless man probably thought that the intruder would drown in the flood waters. But Kaladharan made use of the powers of the diamond and rose in the air. The armless man was baffled. "What's this magic?" he shouted.

"Ah! It's all the work of the diamond!" said Kaladharan. "You can get whatever you desire."

"I shall give you my magic pot in exchange for the diamond," said the armless man. "Whatever food you want, the pot will give you. And if you place it upside down, the whole place will be flooded!"

Kaladharan nodded to indicate that he was agreeable to the exchange. He



came down and landed inside the hut. He extended his hand holding the diamond as if he was about to give it to the man, knowing fully well that he did not have a hand to accept it. The next moment he commanded the axe to behead him. The axe carried out the order. Thus he came to possess the magic pot also.

He stayed in the hut that night. The next morning he started once again. He walked and walked and reached a forest. Suddenly he heard a loud noise – like that of a thunderclap. He saw animals running hither and thither. The sound was repeated every now and then for some time.

Kaladharan bravely walked to the place from where he thought the sound had come. When he reached there he found an ugly looking giant sitting on a huge rock. He had by his side a drum which, Kaladharan could guess, was the source of the thunderclap-like sound. The giant was biting into a piece of raw flesh. He was amused when he saw the puny Kaladharan in front of him. "Come on, have a share," he said.

Kaladharan was cautious. "Thank you, you're very kind," he said, and sat down on the ground a little away from him. The giant threw a piece of flesh to him. He caught it in his hand



and smelled it. "This is human flesh. I don't eat it!" He then took out the magic pot and blew into it. In no time, there was a little feast spread in front of him. He ate all the food. The giant watched the activity with fascination. "Ah! This is a magic pot; it can give whatever one wants."

The giant could not control his curiosity. "Give it to me! And you take this drum. If you beat on one side, all those in front of it will run away scared. If you beat on the other side, you'll have a whole army for your help."

Kaladharan then handed the pot to the giant, who began blowing into it.





Kaladharan waited for this moment to tap on the axe-handle. "Go and kill him!" he commanded. The axe did as it was ordered to. The giant's gruesome head was soon separated from his body.

Kaladharan now added the magic drum to his priceless possessions. He roamed many countries. In one country he found the people suffering from a cruel king, who took pleasure in teasing and tormenting his subjects. He was particularly suspicious of any stranger entering

his kingdom. His soldiers noticed Kaladharan on the streets and tried to catch him. Kaladharan beat the drum and a horde of soldiers came out and attacked the soldiers of the land. Some of them were killed while others ran away. Then the king himself led an army and came to capture Kaladharan. With the help of the pot, he produced a flood in which all of them drowned.

The people rejoiced over the death of the cruel king. They made Kaladharan their new king.

● Not to believe in the possibility of permanent place is to disbelieve in the Godliness of human nature.

● A learned man is a tank; a wise man is a spring.

WHAT AN EXCUSE!

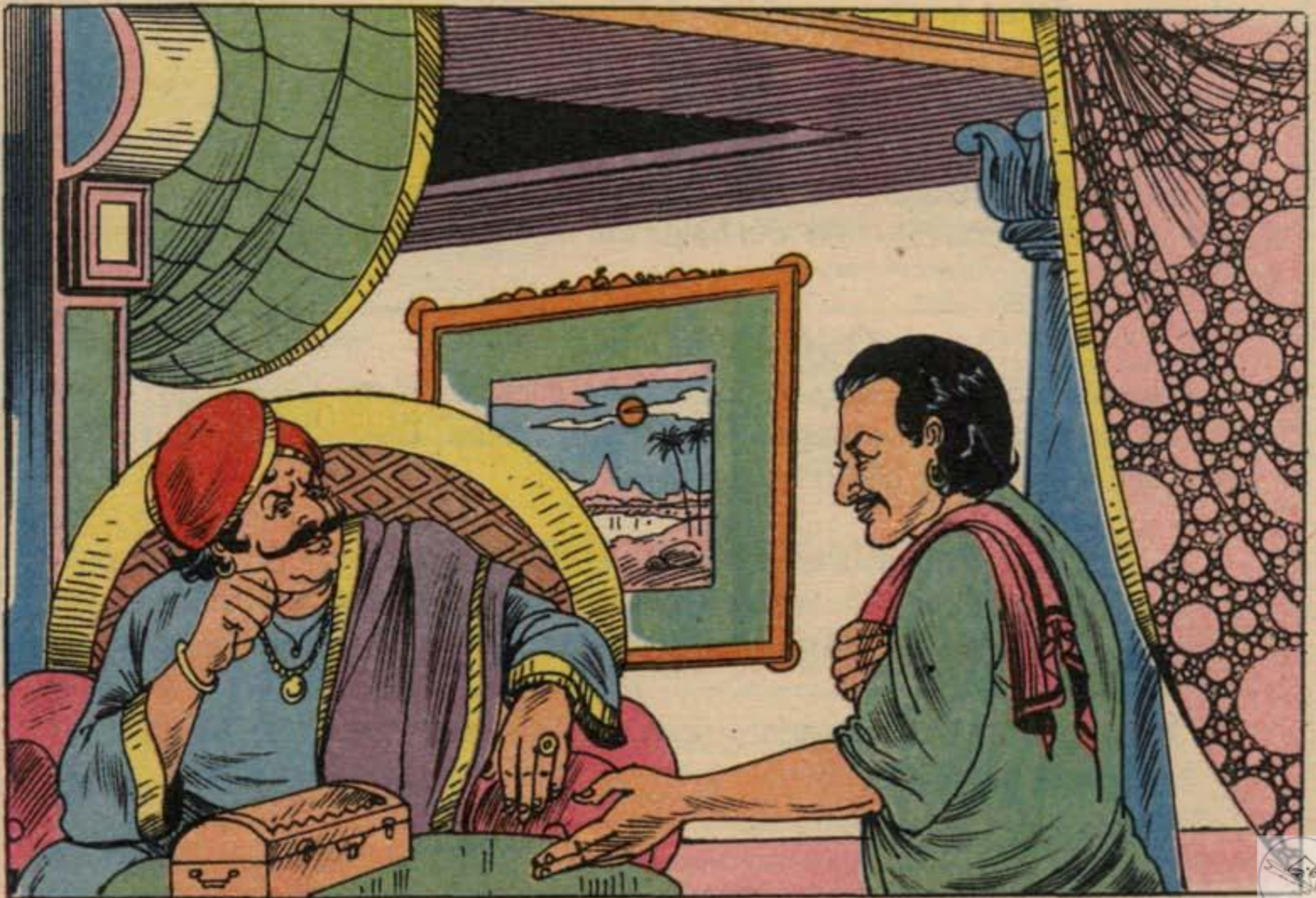
Janakraj, the zamindar of Jaunpur, had a servant called Kinkar. Every morning, he was supposed to dust everything, from furniture to windows to curios. The zamindar always found him spending hours polishing the silver box in which he used to keep betel leaves, arecanut, tobacco and other items for chewing after taking a meal. He had also noticed Kinkar often neglecting shelves, almirahs, and stands.

One day, he pulled up the servant. "Kinkar, I don't find you dusting and cleaning these chairs, teapoys, and other things. But you never fail to clean that silver box. Why?"

"Sir, sometimes, I too take the chewing stuff", he replied coolly. "I should ensure that whatever I use should remain clean and without any dust or dirt."

Zamindar Janakraj was speechless. He merely said, "I see!"

After that day, Kinkar missed the silver *pan* box in the drawing room, and he did not have any idea where his master had kept it. However, he was now more careful in his work.





LET US KNOW

What is the Black Hole of Calcutta?

—Savarirayan, Begumpet

On June 20, 1756, nearly 150 British nationals were confined in a small dungeon in Fort William in Calcutta. Of them, about 125 are reported to have died from heat and lack of air. That cubby-hole later became infamous as the Black Hole.

How did football get the name soccer?

—Vinod Prakash Mehra, Dehra Dun

The first football association was formed in October 1863 in London. When it conducted matches and tournaments, they came to be called 'association football' or soccer.

Why is salt mixed with ice in an ice-cream box?

—Priti Ramaswami, Coimbatore

By adding salt, we can lower the freezing point of ice. This makes ice remain in a solid state for a longer period and helps the milk content of the ice-cream mixture to solidify.

OUR READERS WRITE

I like *Chandamama* very much because it improves my knowledge. There should be two or three pages for Current affairs, Quiz, Jokes, and other activities in which we can participate.

—Swizer Fernandes, Goa

'A Window on the World' deals with current affairs. Isn't 'Do You Know?' something like a Quiz? For 'activities', wait for the April issue in which we begin some activity-oriented holiday features. Ensure your copy from April!

—EDITOR

Chandamama is a wonderful magazine. It improves the reader's English. In East or West, North or South, there is not a word to describe wonderful *Chandamama*.

—S. Padma Priya, Bangalore



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PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



L. Bhavani



Taji Prasad

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? You may write it on a post card and mail it to Photo Caption Contest, Chandamama, to reach us by the 20th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

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PICKS FROM THE WISE

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed,
and some few to be chewed and digested.

—Bacon

Fame is the last infirmity of noble minds.

—Milton



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